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TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

A Quarterly Marian Magazine



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Mary and the Second Vatican Council

We are in the midst of a pandemic, which envelops humanity, Christianity and Catholicity with unique spirituality of the Cross. The Cross and Crosses are significant reality is Christian life and consecrated living. The situation challenges us and demands a response from us. At this juncture we look up to our Savior Jesus Christ and His Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary as our only hope. She is the great intercessor as the Second Vatican Council Calls her. She brought about by her intercession the beginning of miracles of Jesus the Messiah (Jn 2:1-11). Anyone who flies to her protection, implores her help or seeks her intercession is left unaided. Today by her manifold intercession she continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. So we ask her to intercede for us in our need for healing, wholeness and fullness of the Life of Christ in us and around us. Like a good mother, the Church implores the Lord that humanity may be freed from this scourge, invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy and Health of the Sick, and of her Spouse Saint Joseph, under whose patronage the Church has always walked the world. May Mary Most Holy and Saint Joseph obtain for us abundant graces of reconciliation and salvation, in attentive listening to the Word of the Lord, which he repeats to humanity today: "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46: 10), "I am with you always" (Mt 28 :20). Through these words the Church encourages us to live our life in the spirit of faith and courage on the face of trials and tribulations.

As we all know the Blessed Virgin Mary is uniquely associated with Catholicism, and the century preceding the Second Vatican Council was arguably the most fertile era of the Catholic Marian Studies. Mary is the type, model, and preeminent member of the Church; she is the Mother of the Church and our mother first and finest disciple. There is a great richness in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on Mary. If we listen attentively to the Spirit speaking through the Second Vatican Council we will discover a solid and chaste basis for a strong Marian devotion, a basis which may be able to be shared more widely in the Christian community, leading to a more widespread, deeper and more solid devotion to the Holy Mother of God.

In 1964, Pope John Paul II published the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, or *Lumen Gentium*, the eighth chapter of which presents the most comprehensive magisterial teaching on the Blessed Virgin Mary. It clearly emphasizes that the Blessed Virgin Mary is not merely a peripheral figure in Christian Faith and in the panorama of theology. It promotes the life, role and mission of Mary as Marian devotees take their bearings from the document. It solicits the person of Mary in the study of Mariology and helps us grow in authentic Marian piety. Mary makes up part of the mystery of the Church: she is not only a 'type' or 'figure' of the Church, but also 'Mother' of all the members.

Pope Paul the VI called the Marian Chapter the 'culmination' (*fastigium*) of the document: the most profound center of the Church is its relationship with Christ, which cannot be separated from the Mother of God who became man. The Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium* describes the relationship between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church (LG 60-65). The document emphasizes Mary's 'maternal duty' which in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His Power. Mary is an associate of the Redeemer; she cooperates in a singular way in the work of the Savior, wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace. Mary is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ (LG 63). Church imitates Mary's holiness because the Mother of God" unites in herself and re-echoes the greatest teachings of the faith (LG 65).

By presenting Mary in the mystery of Christ, also finds the path to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church. Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is in a particular way united to the Church, which the Lord established as he own body. The reality of the Incarnation finds a sort of extension in the mystery of the Church – the Body of Christ. And one cannot think of the reality of the Incarnation without referring to Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word (RM 5). As St. Louis Marie de Montfort wrote in his famous treatise of the *True devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, The Incarnation is the first mystery of Jesus Christ; it is the most hidden; and it is the most exalted and the least known. It was in this mystery that Jesus, in the womb of Mary and with her co-operation, chose all the elect. For this reason the saints called her womb the throne-room of God's mysteries (para 248).

Meditating devoutly on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made Man; the Church reverently penetrates more deeply into the supreme mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more closely patterned after its spouse. The Church benefits from the maternal presence of God's Mother, because she is tied by an enduring and indissoluble bond to the mystery of the mystical body. Since the Liturgy is worship that requires a way of living consistent with it, it asks that devotion to the Blessed Virgin should become a concrete and deeply- felt love of the Church. The faithful will be able to appreciate more easily Mary's mission in the mystery of the Church and her prominent place in the communion of saints. Thus love of the Church will become love of Mary. This issue brings to us the different articles on Mary in the Second Vatican Council. These articles give us deeper insights into Mary' role; in the Life of Christ, the Church, popular devotions, liturgy and her unique mediation. May Mary the Mother mercy intercede for us in our need and guide to her Son Jesus, the source and strength of humanity.

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Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Lucy Thundiylil sccg

When the whole world is in the grip of a killing virus, where thousands and thousands die every day, with an aching heart I prayed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for a cure. All of us spend a lot of time in intercessory prayer and silent meditation to understand the feeling of our God whom we trust. A few reflections increased my faith. When I questioned Jesus why these many had to die, whether they had had time to reconcile with Him, I felt him within me telling me that everyone born on this earth has to die and how they have to die too is in the plan of God. I asked Him whether He feels the pain as we humans feel at the loss of so many men and women. I heard Him say that he too is sorry for the way men neglected the ways of the Lord.

I had been trained from my childhood to pray the ejaculations: such as "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in thee; Jesus, keep me in your Sacred Heart etc..." Today that prayer is replaced by Divine Mercy prayer, or Jericho March prayer, which are also powerful. All these prayers are addressed to the heart of Jesus. But my simple prayers turn out to be, to the Sacred Heart.

I glanced back into history to see where the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus began. I found that it was in the middle-ages. St. Herman Joseph wrote in (1150-1241) "I hail Thee, Kingly Heart most high." Throughout the next three centuries the devotion spread mostly among the consecrated life.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus comes from St. Margaret Mary Alcoque, a French nun who claimed that Jesus appeared to her 4 times in between the year 1673- 1675, and started this specific devotion, namely (1) the

reception of communion on the first nine Fridays, (2) Eucharistic adoration on Thursdays and (3) the celebration of the feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus after the feast of Corpus Christi.

After her death in 1690, devotion was spread through and by many groups but especially by the Jesuits, who opposed Jansenism. Though the Sacred Heart represented the love and mercy for us all, the Jansenists believed that God's love and mercy was not extended to us all. In 1765, Pope Clement XIII approved a feast on the Sacred Heart for France. 91 years later, in 1856 Pope Pious XIX expanded the feast to the whole church. A few years later in 1899 Pope Leo XIII wrote in his encyclical "...the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the cross rising from it shining forth with dazzling splendour amidst flames of love."

Jesus wants all of us to know how much he loved us, and the high price He paid with His death to buy us all. In John 17:25, Jesus prays to the Father that we be loved by Him: "That the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them." St. John of the Cross wrote to a nun in reply, "And where there is no love put love, and you will receive love."

Practice of selfless love for the selfish people is all about love. It is, giving oneself to the people that do not love and care for us in return. The price of reaching heaven is the practice of selfless love here on earth. Namely: 72 times a minute, 4320 times in an hour, and almost 38 million times a year. Every time our heart beats that many times God expects us to love others as Jesus loved. May we be drawn to the heart of Jesus, filled with that love and may we reach to thousands who are not loved.

Mary in the Mystery of Christ

Prabhkar smm

The first journey of Mary: THE ANNUNCIATION

Mary's journey begins with the Annunciation: At the age of 14 (more or less), the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary in Nazareth announcing the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity: God the Son. The Angel greeted her:

"Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her 'Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his Kingdom there will be no end'. And Mary said to the Angel, 'How can this be, since I have no husband?' And the Angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.' And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.' And the Angel departed from her." (Lk 1: 28-38)

'Full of Grace' is the only accurate translation of *Kecharitoumene*. 'Highly favoured one' is the worst translation ever because it destroys the theology of grace (Charis).

Ephesians 1. explains how God bestowed his grace on us in Christ since the foundation of the world. At the moment of creation, God foreknew that he will be saving us by Christ's death and resurrection. That



is how we will receive Christ's grace of redemption. 'The Lord is with you' occurs many times in the Bible. It indicates a permanent situation: the Lord will never leave Mary.

"But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be". Mary's journey is real, human, historical, and concrete. She was not a robot; she was endowed with a free will, feelings, and human psychology.

'Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.' Mary knew that the name 'Jesus' means 'God saves'. The words of the Angel are enigmatic and challenging. Only God knows if Mary, at that moment, thought about the words of Isaiah: "Behold the Virgin will conceive and bear a Son, and will call him Emmanuel" (Is 7:14). The greatness of her child described by the words of the Angel are a promise of a good future for Israel. How Jesus will be great will be more understood through the events of his life.

Mary's journey is real, human, historical, and concrete. She was not a robot; she was endowed with a free will, feelings, and human psychology.

God was requesting the assent of Mary, because without her cooperation it would have been impossible for God to enter our history as an authentic man. In fact, "the Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined Mother should precede the Incarnation." (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, LG 56)

With Mary's 'yes' a Divine Person (God the Son) assumed an authentic human nature. Her faith was a true instrument of Jesus' Incarnation. God was planning the creation of Mary as he decided the creation of the world. With Mary's 'yes' it becomes clear why "when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman." (Gal 4:4) To save humanity, God sent his Son to be incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary; he did not stay up in heaven. With Mary's 'yes' we discover that, even though the search for the divine is innate in us, God is always the one who initiates the contact with humanity: God searches for us before we search for him.

When Mary said yes, her long journey of faith into the mystery of Christ started. It was impossible for her to have understood everything she was getting herself into. Vatican II emphatically urges the faithful to look at Mary as an authentic human being, not a 'superwoman' who upfront knew it all. St. Pope John Paul II compares her faith in the Angel's words to that of Abraham: "Just as Abraham in hope believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations" (Rom 4:18), so Mary, at the Annunciation, having professed her virginity ('How shall this be, since I have no husband?'), believed that...by the power of the Holy Spirit, she would become the Mother of God's Son." (*Redemptoris Mater*, RM 14)

We all have our own Annunciation. Every

day there is an Angel who announces to us God's plan. Often, it does not match our own plans and does not even make any sense to us. We are always allowed to ask questions and 'challenge' God's will. However, it is the 'obedience of faith' to his mysterious plan that will ultimately bear everlasting fruits in us. Walking in the dark is frightening only when we do not entrust our entire existence to Christ. Before we know it, he will wake up in the boat and calm down the storm of our life.

The second journey of Mary: MARY MEETS ELIZABETH

Mary meets Elizabeth on the 'Mountain': Mary took off to meet her cousin Elizabeth in a town called **Ain Karem**, in the hill country of Judea (four miles from Jerusalem). In the same way Moses ascended to Mountain Sinai to meet God and receive the Ten Commandments, so Mary ascended to Jerusalem so Elizabeth would encounter God in her womb. The mountain is the place where the human and the divine meet.

Mary meets Elizabeth, another step in the mystery of her Son: When Elizabeth saw Mary, John the Baptist leaped with joy in her womb because he recognized Jesus. Elizabeth exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord (*Kyrios*) should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the

Obedience of faith' to his mysterious plan that will ultimately bear everlasting fruits in us. Walking in the dark is frightening only when we do not entrust our entire existence to Christ.

"When we were little, we kept close to our mother in a dark alley or if dogs barked at us. Now, when we feel temptations of the flesh, 5 we should run to the side of our Mother in Heaven, by realizing how she is to us, and by means of aspirations.

She will defend us and lead us to the light." -- Saint Josemaria Escriva

baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” (Lk 1:42-45)

The Implications of the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth: As she greets the Virgin Mary, Elizabeth had an unprecedented experience. Having been unexpectedly pregnant, now her son meets the Son of Mary while both were still in the womb. What are the implications of this encounter? The Angel Gabriel greeted Mary “Hail Full of Grace.” Elizabeth greeted her “Blessed are you among women.” If we add both greetings we will have the 'Hail Mary' prayer that we say in the Rosary. “Blessed are you among women” is a further explanation of “Hail Full of Grace” which places Mary as a unique individual in God's plan of salvation. No woman will ever be “Full of Grace” or “Blessed...among woman” like Mary. “Blessed are you among women” is another foundation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” (Eph 1:3) This blessing applies to Mary differently than all human beings in the history of humanity: Jesus' human nature taken from her will be the instrument of our salvation.

Elizabeth confirmed the words of the Angel Gabriel concerning the Son of Mary: “Blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Elizabeth confirmed the words of the Angel Gabriel by calling Mary “the Mother of my Lord (*Kyrios*).” This expression is behind the dogma of the Church: Mary is *Theotokos* (Mother of God). In the Old

The Virgin Mary travels to the mountains of Judea this time, however, carrying God himself. Elizabeth becomes the Old Testament character who encounters the Lord 'in flesh and blood' in the womb of Mary.

Testament the expression *Kyrios* is used exclusively to describe Yahweh, God. Calling Jesus *Kyrios* is the most explicit proof of Jesus' divinity and equality to God the Father. Encountering Mary, Elizabeth's son, John the Baptist, witnessed and confirmed the words of his mother by leaping for joy.

St. Pope John Paul II teaches: “The fullness of grace announced by the Angel means the gift of God himself. Mary's faith, proclaimed by Elizabeth at the Visitation, indicates how the Virgin of Nazareth responded to this gift.” (RM 12). Mountains in the Old Testament are symbolic of the presence of God: among other, Moses, Elijah, and Jesus go up the mountain to meet and communicate with God. The Virgin Mary travels to the mountains of Judea this time, however, carrying God himself. Elizabeth becomes the Old Testament character who encounters the Lord 'in flesh and blood' in the womb of Mary. Elizabeth became an instrument for Mary to advance one more step in understanding the mystery of her Son.

The third journey to the cave: CHRISTMAS

Birth of Christ, another step for Mary: When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Angels appeared to the shepherds and confirmed the birth of the Saviour. They came and told Mary about the Angels' message. Mary was contemplating these things in her heart, thinking and pondering what kind of child is this. The

Magi came to visit the child and 'fell down and worshiped him'. They offered gold (symbol of kingship), frankincense (symbol of Jesus' divinity), and myrrh (symbol of his suffering). The message of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation and the words of Elizabeth prepared Mary for the message of the shepherds. Hearing this, Mary advanced a little bit more in understanding the mystery of her Son.

Mary face to face with the mystery: When Christ was born and Mary was able to hold and behold him, the mysterious words of the Annunciation and Elizabeth assumed a face, a Person. The promises of the Angel Gabriel and the confirmation of Elizabeth that Mary is the 'Mother of the Lord' now is a reality and history. It is impossible to fathom what Mary was thinking when her Son was born in such a supernatural way. Delving into the unknown was the only choice for her: The Angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, the shepherds, and the Magi are all characters cooperating with the divine plan in introducing the Mother into the mystery of the son.

Implications of Christmas for Mary: The birth of Christ is an encounter between him and his Mother, for the first time face to face. On a human level, if you were Mary who was receiving all these promises from many different characters pointing to something way more extraordinary than anyone could imagine, I would say she was waiting to see the face of this mystery. Such an encounter, similar to us meeting Christ spiritually for the first time even though hers was on the deepest possible level, has several implications:

Jesus Christ is a baby now who has needs like all babies of the world. He was not a little 'monster'; he needed protection, care, food, and home. His earthly existence is real, authentic, concrete, and is subject to the vicissitudes of our human conditions. Jesus' relationship with his Mother and Joseph, because of his mysterious conception and birth, has a unique dimension. It is impossible for Mary to have a normal relationship with her Son who was born of her without the cooperation of man. Her mind was constantly focused on his mysterious identity. Luke the Evangelist summarizes that by saying: "and Mary pondered all these things in her heart." Christmas is both the end of a journey and the beginning of another. The 'Word' of the Angel and Elizabeth are now 'flesh': the fulfillment of the promises. But being in flesh is the beginning of a long unknown journey filled with surprises and bumps.

The journey to the Temple: Simeon reveals the identity of Jesus

The presentation to the Temple: When Jesus was presented in the temple to be circumcised, the prophet Simeon acknowledged him to be the awaited Messiah: "For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2:29-32). These words heard by Mary confirm the words of the Angel at the Annunciation and the words of Elizabeth. It is another step in confirming the enigmatic identity of Christ. A 'light for revelation' reaffirms the Magi's and the shepherd's message to Mary on Christmas.

The revelation of Mary's sorrowful motherhood: Simeon said to Mary: “and a sword will pierce through your own soul also.” (Lk 2:35) and Jesus will be “a sign that is spoken against” (Lk 2:34). These words predict Mary's deep suffering as she will be standing at the foot of the cross. A new dimension is now added to Mary's journey of faith. Her motherhood will be filled with sacrifices and suffering. But the journey continues: “Simeon's words seem like a second Annunciation to Mary, for they tell her of the actual historical situation in which the Son is to accomplish his mission, namely, in misunderstanding and sorrow” (RM 16).

These words predict Mary's deep suffering as she will be standing at the foot of the cross. A new dimension is now added to Mary's journey of faith. Her motherhood will be filled with sacrifices and suffering.

Implications of Simeon's words for Mary: The words of Simeon have several implications:

They strongly confirm Christ as the Saviour Messiah awaited by Israel. They don't leave any doubt about the identity of the Saviour to the point that death for Simeon does not matter. He was promised to see the redeemer before dying and now he did and is confirming it to his Mother Mary. The eyes of Simeon have seen 'God's salvation' which is exactly the meaning of the word 'Jesus'. This Hebrew word means 'God saves'. Mary heard this statement and became more aware that her Son is Israel's salvation. As summary, Mary knows now that her journey will be mixed with sorrow but she does not know the details of how and when this sorrow will take place.

The journey to Egypt: First sign of Mary's sorrowful Motherhood

Tiring physical journey: Today we jump on a plane and travel around the world in no time. It wasn't like that when Mary and Joseph got up and had to flee to Egypt. Beside the physical challenges of the journey (most likely on a donkey), the anxiety and fear of Herod's threat made the situation worse. In fact, “Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” (Mt 2:13). Simeon's words start being fulfilled: The threat of Herod to kill the Child and the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt begin to fulfil Simeon's predictions of Mary's sorrowful motherhood. There is no way Mary understood why King Herod wanted to kill her Son. Entrusting her destiny to the words of the Angel who appeared to Joseph, Mary again shows her obedience of faith in this life threatening situation.

The journey to find Jesus in the Temple: Mary's sorrowful Motherhood continues

Losing Jesus in the temple at the age of 12: Mary and Joseph lost Jesus at the age of 12 in the temple and were anxiously looking for him. When Mary found him and asked him the reason behind his action, he answered: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house? And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them.” (Lk 2:48-50). Jesus' redemptive mission is above all human affairs: As Jesus reveals his absolute dedication to the Father's mission, he proves to Mary that his mission goes beyond all human affairs. His words opens Mary's mind to a different dimension of his Person and work.

Right there at the center of Judaism, Jesus gives a summary of his Person and work. Unlike the Jewish way of addressing God, Jesus calls God 'Abba' to the absolute dismay of the Jews. His relationship with the Father is ontological and on a different level when compared to anyone; that's why the Jews wanted to kill him. The second dimension is the nature of his work: Jesus is there to accomplish the work of the Father no matter what the conditions of life are.

Jesus' redemptive mission is above all blood relation: Jesus mysteriously announced the center of his life: the business of the Father. Here, in parallel words, Jesus confirms again the supremacy of God's Word in our lives above all human ties and relationships (even those of blood): Mary's anxiety as she looks for Jesus is part of her sorrowful journey. In fact, no matter what anyone feels or goes through, the plan of God must not be hindered. Later on, Jesus will teach that those who prefer the ties of family over him, are not worthy to be his disciples.

Jesus was obedient to Mary and Joseph: After his words at the temple, Jesus went down to Nazareth and was obedient to them. Such a statement confirms the authentic human relationship between Jesus and Mary and Joseph. Just because he is divine, Jesus was not a monster who disregarded God's commandments of "honour your mother and your father". This obedience becomes exemplary when Jesus obeys the wishes of Mary in Cana and of course, in the dimension of heaven, such obedience turns into intercession by nature.

The journey to Jesus' public ministry: Mary comes out of her hidden life

Jesus bestows the blessing of faith on his Mother publicly: When Jesus was preaching, Mary along with his cousins came to see him. He was told that 'your Mother is here to see you.' He said, "My mother... is the one who listens to the Word of God." (Lk 8:21) His answer confirms that no one listens to the Word of God better than Mary, even though it does not look like that on the outside. In fact, as the Gospel of Luke relates, Elizabeth said to Mary earlier: "Blessed is she who has believed what was told to her by the Lord would be fulfilled." (Lk 1:45) But the reason Jesus said it this way too is because he "wishes to divert attention from motherhood understood only as a fleshly bond, in order to direct it towards those mysterious bonds of the spirit which develop from hearing and keeping God's word" (RM 20).

Obedience becomes exemplary when Jesus obeys the wishes of Mary in Cana and of course, in the dimension of heaven, such obedience turns into intercession by nature.

Mary the first disciples of her Son: Mary said to the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation: "Let it be done unto me according to your word." (Lk 1:38) These words are not said once and for all; rather, they will be repeated as Mary's awareness of her Son's mystery became clearer to her. As Mary progresses in understanding the mission of Jesus, she continues to repeat the same words in the same attitude: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your word." St. Pope John Paul II beautifully comments that Mary's firm attitude in following Jesus, makes her the first disciple of her Son and "the first to whom he

seemed to say: 'Follow me,' even before he addressed this call to the Apostles or to anyone else (Jn 1:43)." (RM 20)

The journey to the Cross: Mary's deepest suffering in human history

Mary's ultimate test at the foot of the Cross: At the foot of the cross all promises made to Mary were put to the test. The words of the Angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, shepherds, magi, and the prophet Simeon are now being challenged: the identity and mission of Mary's Son did not seem to match what was said about him from the beginning. St. Pope John Paul II taught that her presence at the foot of the cross is "perhaps the deepest *'kenosis'* (self-emptying, suffering) of faith in human history." (RM 18) How is it possible to keep the faith in the words of all those characters at the beginning of the journey when Mary sees her Son dying, hanging on the cross?

"The first to whom he seemed to say: 'Follow me,' even before he addressed this call to the Apostles or to anyone else

Mary keeps the faith at the foot of the Cross:

Against all odds, Mary kept the faith and stood at the foot of the cross. There will be no human being ever who will stand by the cross of Jesus Christ in the absolute darkest moments of life like Mary did. In fact, all the promises that Mary heard from the beginning from many different characters are now being challenged. "The recent events on Calvary had shrouded that promise in darkness, yet not even beneath the Cross did Mary's faith fail. She had still remained the one who, like Abraham, 'in hope believed against hope (Rom 4:18). But it is only after the Resurrection that hope had shown its

true face and the promise had begun to be transformed into reality." (RM 26)

At the foot of the Cross the New Adam and the New Eve recreate humanity: The old wood of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that brought about sin and destruction is now being replaced by the wood of the cross. The old Adam and Eve who were condemned are now being replaced by the New Adam and the New Eve. The disobedience of Adam and Eve is now being replaced by the obedience unto the cross of the new Adam (Phil) and the 'obedience of faith' of the New Eve. At Cana, Jesus called his Mother 'Woman' which replaces the old Eve and here at the foot of the cross he again calls her 'Woman' which is the ultimate fulfillment of the new creation. St. Irenaeus says in this regard: "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith." (Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* III, 22, 4: S. Ch. 211, 438-444) And again St. Pope John Paul II: "How can one doubt that especially now, on Golgotha, this expression goes to the very heart of the mystery of Mary, and indicates the unique place which she occupies in the whole economy of salvation?" (RM 24) Mary becomes the 'Woman' spoken of in the book of Genesis when God promised Eve that the "seed of the woman...will crush the head of the serpent" (Gen 3:15). Mary also becomes the woman spoken of in the Book of the Apocalypse (12:1). Thus she is the 'Woman' from beginning of creation until the end of salvation.

Jesus' resurrection as the ultimate revelation of Mary's journey: Only after the resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit did Mary

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Mary in the Mystery of the Church

Selva Kumar smm

Introduction

St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort was a famous writer who wrote the treatise on "True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary" at the beginning of the 1700s, but the manuscript remained practically unknown for more than a century due to French revolution in France. Later in the year 1842 it was discovered by Fr. Rautureau smm at *St. Laurent - sur - Sevre* and published in the year 1843. The work was an instant success, proving extraordinarily effective in spreading the true devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. St. John Paul says "I myself, in the years of my youth, found reading this book a great help, there I found answers to my questions" for at one point I had feared that if my devotion to Mary "became too great, it might end up compromising the supremacy of the worship owed to Christ". Under the wise guidance of St. Louis Marie, I realized that if one lives the mystery of Mary in Christ this risk does not exist. In fact this Saint's Mariological thought is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and in the truth of the Incarnation of the Word of God. St. Louis Marie's teachings on Mary are very much accepted by the church today. The Second Vatican Council chapter eighth of the Decree on the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) had been influenced by Montfort's True Devotion to Mary and as a Montfortian I am proud to acknowledge this fact and proud of my founder.

Fifty years have elapsed since the eventful Second Vatican Council. To some extent its spirit is felt in the Church with the many changes

taking place in her life, mission and structure. Second Vatican Council has given a new look to Mary, retrieving her biblical image. This is what I wish to share with you in this article. Mary figures prominently in the



Christian community as mother, and devotion to her has become central to the spirituality of the catholic and orthodox traditions. Prayers and hymns are composed and novenas and feasts are celebrated in her honour. Churches, Cathedrals and religious orders are named after her. Popular piety treats her as a Goddess. Portrayal of Mary in Christian sculpture, art and paintings is another characteristic expression of the deep devotion to the Mother of God.

The formal treatment of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Second Vatican Council from 1962 - 1965 was solemnly promulgated on 21st November 1964 as the eighth and final of the Council's most foundational document *LG*. There was intense debate over whether there should be a separate document on Mary or whether it should be included in the document on the Church. By a margin of just forty votes it was decided to include the document on Mary in

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the Constitution on the Church. There was a constant tension between presenting Mary in terms of her analogy with Christ and her analogy with the Church. After eight drafts, a remarkable balance was achieved. While the Council Fathers had no intention of saying a final word on Mary, they presented a biblical-dogmatic treatise that provides a solid foundation for teaching about Mary, which continued to be developed and commented on by the Post - Conciliar Popes, especially by St. John Paul II.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is uniquely associated with Catholicism, and the Century preceding the Second Vatican Council was arguably the most fertile era for Catholic Marian studies. In 1964, Pope Paul VI Published the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG), the eighth chapter of which presents the most comprehensive Magisterial teaching on the Blessed Virgin Mary. As part of its Marian initiative, the Institute for Church life at the University of Notre Dame invited scholars to a Conference held at Notre Dame in October 2013 to reflect the rich Marian legacy on the eve of the Second Vatican Council. The essays unanimously stressed that the Blessed Virgin Mary is not merely a peripheral figure in Christian faith and in the panorama of theology. More than fifty years after *Lumen Gentium*, students of theology as well as Marian devotees take their bearings from this document in order to promote the person of Mary and the study of Mariology, as well as growing in authentic Marian piety.

The Concept of Blessed Virgin Mary in *Lumen Gentium*

In writing *Lumen Gentium*, the Council

Fathers of Vatican II understood well that "Mary's role in the mystery of the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it, this union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's Virginal conception up to his death" (CCC 964 & LG 57). There was considerable debate about whether Mary should be discussed in an entirely separate document, or whether she should be included in the document on the Church. The Holy Spirit guided the Council Fathers to decide to emphasize Mary's role as a pre-eminent member of the Church. In placing the chapter on Mary in the document, the Council Fathers wished to communicate to the faithful that she is the Model of the Church and "unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith" (67).

Mary in the Mystery of the Church (LG 60-65), in these numbers, we are going to study the role of Mary in the mystery of the Church.

1. Mary's Maternal Solicitude for the Church

"In accordance with the eternal plan of providence, Mary's divine Motherhood is to be poured out upon the Church, as indicated by statements of tradition, according to which Mary's 'motherhood' of the Church is the reflection and extension of her Motherhood of the Son of God" (RM 23). Having been brought into the mystery of Christ as His Mother, Mary also enters into the mystery of the Church, Her mystical Body, precisely as Mother. For

Singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is our Mother in the order of grace

throughout her in a “singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is our Mother in the order of grace” (LG 61).

2. Mystical Bride and Spiritual Mother of the New Covenant

According to an eminent Scripture scholar, Fr. Ignace de la Potterie, both wine and wedding feast in the Old Testament announce the beginning of messianic times. In the biblical terms of the New Testament, a wedding feast is clearly a symbol of the New Covenant in Christ, the restoration of the union of God with His people. On the allegorical level, Jesus is the Bridegroom of the wedding feast, the mediator of the Covenant, But if Jesus is the Bridegroom, who is the Bride? While on the individual level, Mary is the Mother of Jesus, on the allegorical and symbolic level, the Fathers of the Church also call her the helpmate, the 'New Eve' accompanying the 'New Adam' in His work of Redemption. She is therefore in this sense the 'Bride' who collaborates with the mystical 'Bridegroom' in the conception of new children to supernatural life, establishing the New Covenant in and through Christ of God with His people.

3. The Marian Dimension of the Church

The Marian dimension is the dimension of faith and charity. This Marian dimension is particularly relevant for women who see in Mary not only a Mother but also their most clear model of perfected womanhood, “by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement” (RM 46). In her, the *Immaculata*

The self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows, limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work, the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement.

and *Tota Pulchra*, women can see the greatest of human, and particularly feminine virtues: the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows, limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work, the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement.

4. Taking Mary as our Spiritual Mother

At the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI Proclaimed Mary “Mother of the Church”. “Mary, who from the beginning had given herself without reserve to the person and work of her Son, could not but pour out upon the Church, from the very beginning, her maternal self-giving” (RM 40). She is given to the Church and to each individual as a mother, establishing a very personal and entirely unique relationship with each child of God. At the word of Jesus 'Behold your Mother' the Apostle John welcomed Mary “into his own home”. Taking her into his home the disciple “brings her into everything that makes up his inner life, that is to say, into his human and Christian ‘I’: he “took her to his own home.” Thus the Christian seeks to be taken into that 'maternal charity' with which the Redeemer's Mother 'cares for the brethren of her Son' “in whose birth and development she cooperates” (RM 45). Jesus tells us also to “take (Mary) into our home” into our lives and hearts as our Mother. She cares for us and watches over us; with tender love, she leads us through

all our trials and ever closer to her Son. "Piously meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church with reverence enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more and more like her Spouse" (LG 65). In our daily devotions we should ever include a heartfelt prayer and greeting to our Mother, preferably even a daily Rosary. St. John Paul II recommends that we take Mary into our lives in a special way through a formal consecration to her, following for example the method of our founder St. Louis Marie de Montfort. Wherever we may be or in whatever state of soul, she will help us to find the path to Christ and Christian holiness.

Truths about Mary

1. Mary is not only handed over to us through the scripture but also through the tradition
2. Mary's maternal role: Because Mary gave birth to the second person of the Blessed Trinity made flesh, she is truly 'the Mother of God.'
3. She is a Virgin: Mary remained a virgin, before, during and after the birth of Jesus.
4. She is the Immaculate Conception: Mary was immaculately conceived in the womb of her Mother. She was preserved from the stain of original sin from the very moment of her conception. This does not mean that Mary had no need of redemption, but rather that she was redeemed in a wholly unique fashion.
5. Immaculate Virgin was assumed bodily to heaven: At the end of her life on earth, Mary was taken up into heaven, body and soul, where she continually intercedes with her Son for us.

Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council invites people to know Mary in the mystery of Christ and

the Church to imitate her fidelity, to have a personal relationship with her, to venerate her and beseech her intercession. Her active presence in the pilgrim church is stressed in many documents. The activity of the Blessed Mother is not only affirmed in the textbooks and documents but they are amply clear in the lives of peoples from time immemorial.

From ancient times Mary is seen not merely passively engaged by God but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. Mary was not a substitute mother as one chosen to merely give Jesus human life but through her motherhood she was drawn into the mystery of salvation. Mary is thus not merely an individual overwhelmed by God's power but one in whom God's encounter with our human world has taken place. Her vocation extends beyond the personal encounter of God with Mary to the encounter of God with the human family in need of salvation. Her *fiat* is the "first voice of an ever growing chorus of responses coming from all believers" says Joseph Neuner SJ as well as from all people of good will who participate as co-partners in God's work of fashioning a world of beauty and harmony. Mary's response and involvement in God's saving mission becomes not only the pattern of every Christian life but of every human life for God's encounter with human freedom is realized not only in the community of disciples of Jesus but also in the community of persons.

Where the Church is, there is Mary first and always. Where Mary is, there is the Holy Spirit, Soul of the Church. Where the Holy Spirit is, there is Christ, Son of the Father, our only Saviour and Mediator.

Mary, Redeemer's Mother

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This Encyclical “*Redemptoris Mater*, Redeemer's Mother” on Mary was presented to the Church by Pope John Paul II on 25th March 1987. In the introduction the Pope says that “The Mother of the Redeemer has a precious place in the plan of salvation, for when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. . .” (Gal 4:4-6). The document specifies two important roles of God's mother in the mystery of Christ and on her active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church.

Among many prophecies, on the plan of redemption, Isaiah helps us to know how God executes his plan. “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is 7:14). The prophet makes his message clear to King Ahaz and to the people of Israel. The message is that all the kings will have their own defects, priorities and seek all kinds of comforts. Ahaz did not listen to God's voice. King Solomon asked for wisdom and God said “behold I now do according to your word. Behold I gave you a wise and discerning mind so that none like you has been before you and none like shall arise after you” (1Kgs 3:12). He accumulated wealth and had many foreign wives which diverted his attention from God, and he had built shrines to their gods. He ignored the voice of Yahweh in his heart, and thus he brought about his own downfall (1 Kgs 11:1-13). Wealth, women and wine were the main cause of downfall in the life of leaders.

Darkness covers his life and Satan takes the lead. God is not satisfied with Solomon; he refuses him but God takes the initiative.



The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is fulfilled in Mary when she said “Behold I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). In saying this, Mary does not lower herself in false humility, instead she expresses her faith and her surrender. This dramatization of the inner experience of Mary's call to be the mother of the Messiah is the call for mission. This fact interprets the experience as a call to a special mission in salvation history. By her unhesitant and unreserved “yes”, Mary accepts the vocation of being the mother of the Messiah and makes possible the birth of God's Word into the world. In her “yes” she represents humankind's acceptance of God's offer of salvation and thus becomes the 'first of the redeemed' and the type of the church. It is this “yes” of Mary, her perfect submission to God's will, that is the essence of her virginity and is the physical symbol of this total and permanent belonging to God.

As Paul says “when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoptions as sons” (Gal 4:4-5). As we examine the life of the kings, High Priests, Scribes and Sadducees, great governors, who were qualified and experts in the Scriptures and law had sinned against the innocents and God.

In spite of reminding them their faults, they would not repent.

The appointed time or the fullness of the time can mean that the eternal enters into time, time itself is redeemed and being filled with the mystery of Christ becomes definitively "salvation time." Finally this "fullness" designates the hidden beginning of the Church's journey.

Mary is a noble member according to the liturgy, God chose her who was pure, God-centred and ready to walk with the Lord. John in his Gospel tells "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). This world or our life cannot offer more than it has but God's Word offers eternal life. In his wise plan God chose Mary to be his mother in the world and in the world to come.

The Council of Ephesus (431) had discussed and brought to light the Incarnation of Word. "The Word became flesh" in Mary (Jn 1:14). Flesh indicates the whole of human nature considered in its frailty and limitations. Since the divine Word 'became' flesh, this incarnation is not a mere appearance but a real fact. God expected that the whole human race should co-operate for the salvation, Mary begins to co-operate and salvation is made possible. The dogma of Mary's motherhood was for the Council of Ephesus and is for the Church like a seal upon the Incarnation, in which Mary has a higher role.

Mary and the Church

Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is in a particular way united with the Church, "which the Lord established as his own body." One

cannot think of the reality of the Incarnation without referring to Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word. Pope John Paul II also considers primarily that "pilgrimage of faith" in which "the Blessed Virgin advanced," faithfully preserving her union with Christ. In this way a "twofold bond" which unites the Mother of God with Christ and with the Church takes on historical significance. It is not a personal journey of the Blessed Virgin but a journey of faith with her beloved Son Jesus. With Jesus our supreme shepherd, Mary the Mother and the Church walk toward salvation. The pilgrimage of faith indicates the interior history, that is, the story of souls.

In the Encyclical *Christi Matri* and subsequently in the Apostolic Exhortations *Signum Magnum* and *Marialis Cultus*, he expounds the foundations and criteria of the special veneration which the Mother of Christ receives in the Church, as well as the various forms of Marian devotion-liturgical, popular and private-which respond to the spirit of faith.

The Council speaks about a pilgrimage of faith, devotion to Mary is also because she is a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. She is virgin and mother, for as virgin she keeps herself pure, faithful to her call and as Mother she is united with her Son and the Church. She is filled with the grace of God. For the messenger greets Mary "full of grace"; in the biblical language, Grace is the special gift which according to the New Testament has its source preciously in the Trinitarian life of God himself, God who is love (1 Jn 4:8). The fruit of this love is "the election" of which the Letter to the Ephesians speaks. On the part of God, this

election is the eternal desire to save man through a sharing in the supernatural life. As God elects the person, he sows the seed of holiness. The angel announces God's message to Mary.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). The annunciation, therefore, is the revelation of the mystery of the Incarnation at the very beginning of its fulfilment on earth. She enters into the plan full of grace, becomes the beloved daughter of the eternal Father, admirable mother of the Son and temple of the Holy Spirit. She belongs to the "weak and poor of the Lord" bears in herself, like no other member of the human race, that "glory of grace" which the Father "has bestowed on us in his beloved Son, and this grace determines the extraordinary greatness and beauty of her whole being. Mary thus remains before God, and also before the whole of humanity, as the unchangeable and inviolable sign of God's election, spoken in Paul's letter: "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, . . . he destined us in love to be his sons and daughters. . ." (Eph 1:4-5). This election is more powerful than any experience of evil and sin, than all that "enmity" which marks the history of man. In this history Mary remains a sign of sure hope.

The mother of the redeemer has a greater role in the Church today. She took the bold step as the representative of Israel and said yes to the plan of God. The book of Exodus can narrate the poor response of Israelites. "Now if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine. . ." (Ex. 19:5-6).

All the people responded with one voice, "All that the Lord has said, we will do" (Ex 19:8). Israel is asked to become a listening people, reflect and respond. Again in their journey after some time, they refused to be faithful to the Lord God (Ex 24:3). Joshua tried to renew the covenant with his people and all the people with one voice "we will serve the Lord" again after listening to Joshua the people said "we will serve the Lord, our God, and obey his commands" (Josh 24:20-24). Thus Israelites took for granted their promises to the Lord God and broke the covenant going after other gods. Mary's faith at the annunciation inaugurates the new covenant. Just as Abraham who "in hope believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations" (Rom 4:18), so Mary, at annunciation, having professed her virginity, believed that through the power of the Most High, by the power of the Holy Spirit, she would become the Mother of God's Son.

Mary, the chosen one has a specific role in the life of every person. She is the model virgin-consecrated totally to God. Nothing can distract her union with the Son Jesus. She is a virtuous woman and the best way to teach a virtue is to live it. By imitating her we imitate Jesus. She is the mother of Jesus and the Church. In general when we reflect on mother's role in our life; Abraham Lincoln said "no man is poor who has a godly mother." Harriet Freezer said "Men want to improve only the world, but mothers want to improve their whole family. That is much harder task. Sir Isaac Newton's mother prayed with and for her son every day of her life. This is what we observe in the life of every mother. Mary our Mother was not different. She prayed and continues to pray for the whole of humanity. The Mother of the redeemer pleads for redemption.

Mary in the Liturgy

Anula Op

Introduction

Devotion, affection and dedication to Mother Mary remain an important part of all that is best in Christianity. Catholicism insists that God alone deserves worship and Mary, unique among all saints as the mother of Jesus, is a special guide, example, and companion on the way¹. The Church right from the beginning venerated Mary for her role in the History of Salvation and in her liturgical acts always pay honour to Mother Mary. Veneration of Mary in the Liturgical services includes praise of her supreme excellence, reverence for her dignity, gratitude for all the benefits obtained through her, petitions for the blessings we need and lastly imitation of her splendid example². The Second Vatican Council tried to present a biblical, theological and ecclesial image of Mary to the faithful so that they could model their lives on the example of Mary. Just as feasts were introduced for Jesus, so were they also introduced for Mary. Several events concerning Mary's life are commemorated during the yearly Liturgical cycles and are discussed below. The liturgy is the best way to understand Mary and therefore, the people of God celebrate her feasts in liturgy and draw inspiration for an authentic Christian life.

1. Solemnities of Mother Mary



Solemnities are the highest rank of Liturgical celebrations, higher than feast days or memorials. In celebrating the solemnities dedicated to Mother Mary, the Church highlights the significance of her part in the life of Jesus and the important role of Mary in the History of Salvation.

1.1 Mary, Mother of God (January 1)

The solemnity of Mother Mary that one observes on January 1 recalls that Mary is what the early Church called her in Greek *Theotokos*, which literally means "Birth-Giver of God," or "God bearer," or "bringer-forth-of-God."³ One of the main reasons for the Church to insist that Mary is the Mother of God is because it is so important to preserve our awareness of her humanity and that of Jesus as Son of God and son of Mary. On the first day of the year, one discovers that Mary seems to be very ordinary, yet so strong, so full of love and compassion. She is the glorious Mother of God. In 431 AD, during the Council of Ephesus, the title *Theotokos* was defended and defined against the heresy of Nestorius. This title *theotokos*, or God-bearer solemnly affirmed in Ephesus, is

¹Mitch Finley, *Surprising Mary*, Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1997, 10.

²Dominic J. Unger, *Our Lady's Daily Hours: The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, New Jersey: St. Antony's Guild Press, 1954, 201.

³Mitch Finley, *Surprising Mary*, Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1997, 55.

rooted in Sacred Scripture and in Tradition.⁴ It is directly substantiated in the Council with references to the Nicene Creed, in which Jesus is Son of God and son of Mary. The pagan Rome celebrated the feast of Janus, a God with two faces, on the First of January with pomp and superstitious practices. St Augustine's homily on January first reveals the nature of the pagan feast and the instruction to the Christians to conduct themselves on this day.⁵ In the 13th century, the feast of circumcision of Jesus was celebrated on January 1. But with the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the Solemnity of Mother of God is restored.

The opening prayer of the feast speaks of the blessing of God to humanity through Mary. The entrance antiphon expresses the maternity of Mary. The preface explains the meaning of the Solemnity with these words, "For by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit she conceived your Only Begotten Son, and without losing the

The Mother of God still continues her work with her Son in the Church and in the world. Her quiet, non-intrusive and effective presence continues in the life of each one.

glory of virginity, brought forth into the world the eternal Light, Jesus Christ our Lord."⁶ The Mother of God still continues her work with her Son in the Church and in the world. Her quiet, non-intrusive and effective presence⁷ continues in the life of each one. Pope Paul VI, called the Solemnity of Mary "a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the new born Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (Lk 2:14), and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace."⁸

1.2 Assumption of Mother Mary (August 15)

The Assumption of Mary is a mystery beyond time and space. Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of Mary's Assumption on November 1, 1950 and declared it a feast. The dogma is defined as "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heaven."⁹ Prior to this, dormition of Mary was celebrated in the East. This feast recalls three themes: Mary died and God raised her; she was immaculate and assumed into heaven. The preface of the feast brings the meaning of the feast.¹⁰ In Mary's assumption, the Church

⁴ J. Neuner, *Mary Mother of the Saviour*, vol. 1, Bangalore: TPI, 1995, 52. Lk 1:35; Lk 1:46-55; Lk 2: 34-35, 49, 51; Jn 2:4-5; The Council defined that Christ has two natures, a divine nature and human nature definitely united in one divine person and Mary is the mother of the whole person of Christ.

⁵ Augustine, *Sermo* 198, 2 (PL 38: 1025). He preached "Let them give New Year's gifts, you should give alms. Let them sing boisterous songs; you should open your hearts to the Word of God. Let them rush to the theater; you should rush to the Church, Let them get drunk; you should fast."

⁶ *Roman Missal*, Preface, 56.

⁷ Michael Amaladoss, "Mary, Mother of God," *The New Leader*, (Jan 1-15, 2020), 9.

⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, 5.

⁹ Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*; William J. Doherty and Joseph P. Kelly, *Papal Documents on Mary*, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1954, 239.

¹⁰ *Roman Missal*, Preface, 812.

celebrates her fulfillment in union with Jesus her Son. Fulfillment comprises the entire person, body and soul. She becomes the symbol of all who die and rise in union with Jesus.¹¹

The Church prays in the Collect and the prayer after communion that through her intercession, we may be brought to the glory of the Resurrection¹² and be exalted on high. After entering heaven, Mary has remained active in the life of the Church. Many Christians believe that she has sometimes manifested her concern in visible appearances and miraculous cures.

1.3 Immaculate Conception of Mother Mary (December 8)

The solemnity of Immaculate Conception is the liturgical celebration of Mary's freedom from the effects of the Original sin from the moment of her conception. It is a spiritual concept. In 1854, Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of Immaculate Conception and made it a feast to be celebrated on December 8. It is defined as "The most blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception was, by the unique grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, preserved intact from all stain of original sin."¹³ The object of the feast is that God preserved Mary from her conception in the womb of Ann from sin in view of the birth of

Christ. She is redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son. The Father blessed Mary, more than any other created person "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" and chose her "in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him in love."¹⁴ This feast is of Eastern origin brought to West by the crusaders in the 12th century.¹⁵

The Immaculate Conception of Mary is also the model and exemplar of the Church. The Church on its pilgrimage on earth is both just and sinful. Vatican II also speaks of the splendor of Immaculate Conception.¹⁶ The opening prayer of the Solemnity invites us to pray that as Mary was preserved from every stain of sin, we, the Church, too, be cleansed and admitted to God's presence.¹⁷ Also the preface explains that in Mary, endowed with the rich fullness of God's grace, God may prepare the Church his beautiful bride without spot or wrinkle, to enter His kingdom.¹⁸ Thus the doctrine of Immaculate Conception is related to God's plan of salvation

The most blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception was, by the unique grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, preserved intact from all stain of original sin.

¹¹ J. Neuner, *Mary Mother of the Saviour*, vol. 1, 103.

¹² *Roman Missal*, Collect, 810; Prayer after Communion, 812.

¹³ Neuner Dupius, 709.

¹⁴ CCC, 492.

¹⁵ James Dudley Perera, *Mary in the Bible and in the Tradition of the Church*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, 94.

¹⁶ LG, 56; "Enriched in the first instant of her conception with the splendor of an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is hailed by the heralding angel, by divine command, as full of grace."

¹⁷ *Roman Missal*, Collect, 882.

¹⁸ *Roman Missal*, Preface, 883.

through Jesus Christ and consequently connected to the foundation of Christian faith.

1.4 The Annunciation (March 25)

Nine months before the celebration of Christmas, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Annunciation. On that day, we remember how the power of God was made known in the conception of Jesus, the Word made flesh. The feast of Annunciation is a love story, a culmination of love between the Spirit of light and the Bride of the Spirit.¹⁹ It recalls Mary's yes to God's call (Lk 1:38). In the virginal emptiness of Mary of Nazareth, Christ was conceived. When Mary surrendered herself to God, there was indeed a miraculous New Heaven and New Earth.²⁰ "He has set His tabernacle in the sun: and He as a bridegroom is coming out of His bride's chamber. His going out is from the end of heaven and His circuit even to the end thereof."²¹

The Annunciation proclaims a radical freedom that belongs to us.²² This feast is also an occasion to look forward in hope. This is expressed in the preface with the following words, "Lovingly she bore him in her immaculate womb, that the promises to the children of Israel might come about and the hope of the nations be accomplished beyond all telling."²³ The pattern of the vocation of Mary is also perhaps the pattern of the vocation of every Christian and

any type of Christian community. When God's plan is manifest to us sometimes it may be painful to accept it, but like Mary, one needs to be ready even to accept the unacceptable and unbelievable.²⁴

2. Feast Days of Mother Mary

The recognition and celebration of the Feast days of Mary enable the Church to renew her relationship with God, and to keep responding to God's invitation to walk in His presence.

2.1 Nativity (September 8)

The Church gathers on September 8 and celebrates her life as a family of faith. She centers its attention on Mary, the preeminent and unique member of the family.²⁵ September 8 helped determine the date for the feast of Immaculate Conception on December 8. The Scriptures do not give an account of Mary's birth but the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James* tells that Anna and Joachim are infertile and pray for a child. They receive the promise of a child who will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. The opening prayer at Mass speaks of the birth of Mary's Son as the dawn of our salvation, and asks for an increase of peace.²⁶

The origin of this feast is found in Syria or Palestine at the beginning of the 6th century. This

¹⁹Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1973, 10.

²⁰Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1973, 10.

²¹Psalms. 18. Gradual of the Mass of Ember Saturday in Advent.

²²Louis J. Cameli, *Mary's Journey*, Washington DC: William H. Sadlier Inc., 1982, 84.

²³*Roman Missal*, Preface, 741.

²⁴James Dudley Perera, *Mary in the Bible and in the Tradition of the Church*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, 25.

²⁵Louis J. Cameli, *Mary's Journey*, 102.

²⁶*Roman Missal*, Collect, 824.

feast is related to the consecration of a Church in Jerusalem, which tradition identifies as the present basilica of St. Ann.²⁷ At Rome, the feast began to be kept toward the end of the 7th century, brought by the Eastern monks. This feast hails the birth of Mary as “the dawn of salvation” and glorifies the Saviour of the world. The world's Redeemer was the light and salvation of the world. So the hope, promise and the loveliness of dawn should be associated with Mary, who gave to the world its Lord of light.²⁸ In the Cantic of Canticles, she is prefigured by the words, “Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?”²⁹

2.2 Visitation (May 31)

This feast originated in the Roman liturgy in the 6th century, but extended to the entire Church by Pope Urban VI in 1389. This feast recalls Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Mary visited Elizabeth to serve and to proclaim. She went to help Elizabeth during the last months of her pregnancy, as well as to proclaim what God had done for her. On the feast of visitation we celebrate the great deeds of God and Mary's

Mary was a woman of the Spirit. Impelled by the Spirit of God, she went to visit Elizabeth. We too recognize the power of the Spirit within us.

journey of faith.³⁰ Mary was a woman of the Spirit. Impelled by the Spirit of God, she went to visit Elizabeth. We too recognize the power of the Spirit within us. The gift of the Spirit also moves us in the celebration of this feast to praise and thank God. This is echoed in the Collect that “faithful to the promptings of the Spirit, we may magnify your greatness with the Virgin Mary at all times.”³¹

Mary was the first Christopher, the first Christ-bearer, the first to share from a full heart the joy that is Christ. In the Mass on the feast of the Visitation, the Prayer after communion expresses this fact “as Saint John the Baptist leapt with joy when he first sensed the hidden presence of Christ, so may your Church rejoice to receive in this Sacrament the same ever-living Lord.”³² She was the first missionary, so pure, so loving and so beautiful that youth will always be inspired to follow in her footsteps.³³

3. Obligatory Marian Memories

The memorials are classified as either obligatory or optional. The obligatory memorials have to be observed whereas the optional memorials do not have to be observed. The obligatory Marian memories are celebrations of a lesser degree but it includes all the aspects of the life of Mary.

²⁷ Eugene Lobo, “Celebrating the Feast of the Nativity of Mother Mary,” <https://indiancatholicmatters.org/celebrating-feast-nativity-mother-mary/> accessed on 28/1/2020.

²⁸ Mary Jean Dorcy, *Our Lady's Feasts*, New Hope, KY: New Hope Publications, 1999, 14.

²⁹ Cant 6. Gradual II, Mass of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

³⁰ Louis J. Cameli, *Mary's Journey*, Washington DC: William H. Sadlier Inc., 1982, 98.

³¹ Roman Missal, Collect, 761.

³² Roman Missal, Prayer after Communion, 762.

³³ Mary Jean Dorcy, *Our Lady's Feasts*, 34.

3.1 Queenship of Mary (August 22)

This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XII in 1955 for May 31, but now has been fixed for August 22, soon after the feast of Assumption. *Salve Regina*, *Regina Ceali and Ave Regina Caelorum* are the hymns related to Mary, the Queen. Mary was never a queen! The title "Christ the king" is the foundation for this title of Mary. The purpose of the feast is that "all may recognize more clearly and venerate more devoutly the merciful and motherly sovereignty of her who bore God in her womb."³⁴ Mary was solemnly crowned by Christ and received by the whole court of heaven as Queen after the Assumption. Vatican II stated that "Mary was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as the queen of the universe."³⁵ The Collect, prayer over the gifts and Communion expresses this fact that the Queen Mother in heaven, intercedes with her King-Son on behalf of the faithful.

3.2 Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15)

In accepting the Angel's message at the Annunciation, Mary knew that her path was marked for suffering. Mary's presence with Jesus in his entire life, especially at Cavalry is a much needed lesson of love and courage. Love demands sacrifice. Mary tasted the depths of sacrifice on Calvary when she lost herself in Christ.³⁶ This feast dates back to the 12th century. Cistercian and Servites promoted it. It was celebrated on the third Friday of Easter. In 1727 this feast was inserted in the Roman

calendar by Pope Benedict XIII to be celebrated on the Friday before Palm Sunday. Servites celebrated this feast on the Sunday after September 14. Pope Pius X fixed it on September 15. This feast focuses on the 7 sorrows of Mary. The *Pieta*, the statue of Michelangelo and *Stabat mater* are related to this feast.

The Church needs to remember Mary's love, her courage and her faith in the crosses of everyday life to participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. This is well expressed in the Collect, prayer over the gifts and communion as she prays, "O God, who willed that, when your Son was lifted high on the Cross, His Mother should stand close by and share His suffering, grant that your Church, participating with the Virgin Mary in the Passion of Christ, may merit a share in His Resurrection."³⁷

3.3 Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7)

Of all the devotions dear to the Mother of God, the Rosary has been one of the principal factors in the spread of Christianity. This feast derives from the feast of St. Mary of Victory instituted by Dominican Pope Pius V after the defeat of the Turkish fleet on 7 October at Lepanto. Pope Clement XI inserted this feast in the Roman calendar for the first Sunday of October, but now assigned to October 7.

The simplicity of the Rosary with the repetition of the vocal prayers makes it a devotion quickly grasped by a child, by a new convert, and by a person who cannot read. But

³⁴ Pope Pius XII, *Ad. Coeli Reginam*, 51.

³⁵ LG, 59.

³⁶ Mary Jean Dorcy, *Our Lady's Feasts*, 57-60.

³⁷ *Roman Missal*, Collect, 831.

the vocal limitations place no bounds on the meditation that accompanies the mysteries.³⁸ The Collect, and the prayer over the gifts invites the Church to intercede to Mother Mary as we ponder on the mysteries in the following words, "We, to whom the incarnation of Christ your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection."³⁹

3.4 Presentation of Mary in the temple (November 21)

It is preserved in Eastern Orthodoxy that Joachim and Anne consecrated their daughter, Mary to God at the age of three in the Jerusalem temple. This feast was popular in the East, but came to the West in the 14th century. To present a child to God, either in a formal ritual or in a private dedication is to lay that child on a symbolic altar and to say to God: "You create. We procreate. My child is your child. Do with this child as you will."⁴⁰ The Collect invites the faithful to venerate the glorious memory of the most Holy Virgin Mary that through her intercession we may merit to receive the fullness of God's grace as she received.⁴¹

4. Optional Marian Memories

The optional memories may be observed at the option in offering Mass or reciting the

Liturgy of the Hours. In the new Roman calendar there are many optional memorials and the Church encourages the faithful to celebrate, without strictly requiring their observance.

4.1 The Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saturday, after the feast of the Sacred Heart

Some years ago, while the late war was raging, fervent prayers were addressed to the all merciful Redeemer, invoking the powerful patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.⁴² This feast has its root in St John Eudes (+1680) who promoted also the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pope Pius XII, wished to dedicate the whole human family to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary. He after repeated requests established the feast for August 22, the Octave day of the feast of the Assumption. He did so that by her intercession may be obtained "peace among nations, freedom for the Church, the conversion of sinners, the love of purity and the practice of virtues."⁴³ But now it has been moved to the Saturday after the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

4.2 Our Lady of Mt Carmel (July 16)

The feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel was instituted in the late 14th century in commemoration of the approval of the rule of the Carmelite Order. Mount Carmel is the mountain overlooking the Mediterranean Sea

³⁸ Mary Jean Dorcy, *Our Lady's Feasts*, 75-76.

³⁹ Roman Missal, Collect, 847.

⁴⁰ My Catholic Life, "Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary," <https://mycatholic.life/saints/saints-of-the-liturgical-year/november-21-presentation-of-the-blessed-virgin-mary-memorial/> accessed on 29/1/2020.

⁴¹ Roman Missal, Collect, 874.

⁴² William J. Doherty and Joseph P. Kelly, *Papal Documents on Mary*, 211-212.

⁴³ "Why is August dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary?" <https://aleteia.org/2019/08/01/why-is-august-dedicated-to-the-immaculate-heart-of-mary/> accessed on 29/1/2020.

on which the prophet Elijah successfully challenged the priest of Baal and won the people to the true God. This is a patronal feast of the Carmelite family. Mount Carmel had become a place for Marian devotion. This feast was listed in the Roman calendar in 1726 and now celebrated all over. It is said that Our Lady gave the scapular to St. Simon Stock in England on July 16th. The scapular is a sign of salvation, protection and pledge of peace. Hence the Collect invites us to pray to the Lord, through the intercession of Virgin Mary so that we may be “fortified by her protection and reach the mountain which is Christ.”⁴⁴

4.3 Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11)

Our Lady's apparitions at Lourdes to Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879) on Feb 11, 1858 lead to the devotion of Mary at Lourdes. It is said that Mary appeared at Lourdes and asked a shrine to be built there in her honor, that processions be made to the grotto and that people should drink of the water. The main emphasis of her message was that the faithful should visit the grotto in order to do penance for their sins and for those of the whole world. Mary also revealed that she is the “Immaculate Conception.” Now, this feast day is marked for the world day of sick. Lourdes is one of the greatest Marian shrines in the world where one obtains refreshment, courage, energy and inspiration to be ardent in Catholic faith. The Collect expresses that we need Mary's intercession “to rise up from our iniquities.”⁴⁵

4.4 Dedication of Mary Major in Rome (August 5)

St. Mary Major is one of the four Roman Basilicas known as patriarchal Cathedrals in memory of the first centers of the Church. Pope Sixtus III (432-440) on August 5th established this feast to recall a miracle of snow in the night of 5th and 6th August. A basilica was erected therein. The fourth century core of St. Mary Major is, intact. It has been embellished and redecorated over the centuries. The relic of the manger of Bethlehem also was kept at this Church. The legend was long celebrated by releasing a shower of white rose petals from the Basilica's dome every August 5.

5. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin

The office of our Lady like the Divine Office was composed of seven sessions, called Hours, of prayer for each day. They are Matins, Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers and Complines. These hours are made up of Psalms, canticles, antiphons, lessons, hymns, versicles, orations, and anthems. The Little Office combines the structure of the Great Office with the meditative repetitions of the rosary. Each hour, like each decade of the Rosary, calls to mind events in the life of Jesus as witnessed by Mary. After, Vatican II, Pope Paul VI, recommended to the institutes that in place of the Little Office they adopt the Divine Office so that they may participate more intimately in the Liturgical life of the Church.⁴⁶ However, every Saturday, is set aside to honour Blessed Mother.

⁴⁴ Roman Missal, Collect, 788.

⁴⁵ Roman Missal, Collect, 727.

Conclusion

Mary was granted liturgical honours very early in the Church and the basis of this devotion is to be found in the Scriptures themselves especially in Luke⁴⁷ and John.⁴⁸ The New Liturgical Calendar has purified the traditional Marian liturgy. Feasts like Annunciation of Mary has been changed to the Annunciation of the Lord (March 25) and the Purification of Mary, to the Presentation of the Lord (Feb 2). The reformed liturgy also has suppressed a few feasts like the Holy Name of Mary (Sept 12), Mother of Mercy (Sept 24) and the Divine Motherhood (11 Oct).

The Church's journey of faith is a journey of worship with Mary. With her, the Church remembers with gratitude and looks forward in hope to what God has done in Jesus Christ. Devotion to our Blessed Mother in the Liturgy has always remained oriented to Christ. The Church celebrates Mary because of who she is in the mystery of Christ and what she tells us

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about that mystery. She is who she is because of her Son. The solemnities and feasts of Mary renew our sense of mission. They enable and empower us to move out of the celebration with an awareness of being sent to a waiting world.⁴⁹ In the Liturgy the divine Motherhood has always been the bridge from Mary to Jesus. Everywhere Christ takes the central position and Mary is the Christ bearer. The more the faithful increase their understanding of Mother Mary and her participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the better it will lead to an increase in fruitful participation in the Liturgy.

⁴⁷ Lk 1:28; 1:42; 1:48

⁴⁸ Jn 2:1-11; 19:27.

⁴⁹ Louis J. Cameli, *Mary's Journey*, Washington DC: William H. Sadlier Inc., 1982, 84.

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understand, as humanly as possible, the full picture of God's mysterious plan. With his resurrection, Jesus revealed the entire mystery of Mary's journey: her motherhood and faith had to suffer the ultimate temptation of doubt before his identity was vindicated. Against all hope, Mary remained faithful and present until her faith was rewarded. As the Church is daily introduced

into the mystery of Christ, she looks at Mary and tries to stay by Christ in the darkest moment of her journey. Every day we are invited to live the mystery of Christ, even though on many occasions there seems to be no hope. Yet, staying at the foot of the cross is our only option.

Mary and Popular Devotion in the Church

Amalraj smm

Introduction

Devotion to Mary is popular in today's modern world due to various apparitions, private revelations, dreams, and visions through which various messages have been revealed to a number of people. In addition, the rare happenings, during which either water or oil or blood or honey comes out of the statues of Mary along with the heavenly fragrance, intensify the practice of the devotion and increase the significance of the role of Mary in the life of the believers. The popular apparitions in Lourdes, Fatima, La Salette, Guadalupe, Medjugorje, Our Lady of Akita, Loreto, Pompeii, Lujan, Harihar, Gunathalamatha, Vailankanni, Poondi, and many more continue to strengthen the faith of the devotees and inspire those who have a desire for a change in their life. The very inspiration to venerate Mary through popular exterior devotional practices began in the second century. It is because, to a great extent, it has its origins in the martyr/saint cult which was well-known among the first Christians. Mary has attained prominence in the devotion of the ordinary people because of her divine motherhood. When people began to experience innumerable miracles and countless healings through the intercession

Where there is an intervention of God there is a divine opportunity for supernatural experience. This is fittingly affirmed in the scripture by the words "with God everything is possible" (Mt 19:26). In this regard I affirm that through each of the apparitions God has spoken to us through His Mother to inject selfless Love

in Humanity. Apparitions are the tangible mediums that our Mother uses to re-affirm her eternal union with her Son and her committed collaboration with her Son which embodies her invitation of everyone to



turn back with a repentant heart to her Son. In this sense it is right to say that we reach her Son through her and this is, no doubt, profoundly Montfortian. *Lumen Gentium* chapter 8 was indeed a much-needed initiative from the Universal Church to define clearly the role of Mary in the life of the Christians and to purify the popular Marian devotion from distortion and deviation and thereby to defend it against the scripture-centered allegations of the separated brethren. "Let them assiduously keep away from whatever, either by word or deed, could lead separated brethren or any other into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church. Let the faithful remember moreover that true devotion consists neither in sterile or transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues" (LG 67).

1. Blessed Mother and the Church

Though allusions were made by the Church Fathers, starting from St. Ambrose to the maternal role of Mary within the Church. She was openly called as Mother of the Church from the eleventh century onwards. Of course, she was not officially declared by the Council

Fathers during the Vatican II as mother of the Church, yet, Pope Paul VI called her mother of the Church at the end of a session in 1963. Marian Pope John Paul II showed his profound love to our Mother by placing a mosaic, carved with the title Mother of the Church, in the apartments of the Vatican. Eventually in 2018, continuing the lineage of his predecessors, Pope Francis placed the feast of Mother of the Church in the liturgical calendar to be annually celebrated following the feast of the Pentecost on which day the Church was concretely born. Though the Council Fathers hesitated to declare her the mother of the Church they did not evade to indicate the divine will behind her spiritual motherhood. It is written, "The maternal duty of Mary toward men" or "the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin on men originates, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure" (62). They also affirmed that her wholehearted co-operation with her Son in his work of salvation through which we are granted access to receive supernatural life make her our mother in the order of grace. The burning charity with which she co-operated is transformed into maternal charity for us and she continues to execute her maternal care as our "Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix" (62).

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2. Blessed Mother's Maternal Love

Her maternal love for human beings is not meant to increase veneration or attention to her but it is to help the faithful on earth to accomplish their journey. It is for the glory of God alone. It is

said in LG 65, "For Mary, who since her entry into salvation history unites in herself and re-echoes the greatest teachings of the faith as she is proclaimed and venerated, calls the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice and to the love of the Father." After laying out the principles which validate a veneration and devotion to Mary Vatican II instructs the faithful not to fall into vanity of exaggeration in showing love to our Mother. Thus, like Montfort, it exhorts the faithful to avoid the false devotions and sterile pious practices which do not bring glory and honor to God. Thus, we should be aware that Vatican II does not prohibit its faithful from profiting from the maternal intercession of Mary however at the same time it insists that all the devotions should be oriented towards Christ and the union with God.

3. Blessed Mother's Maternal Charity

Among the many spiritual authors Montfort occupies an important place because of his teaching of the perfect/true devotion to Mary. His contribution to authentic Marian Spirituality and the corresponding true devotion to Mary was cheerfully recognized by pope John Paul II who describes, "In this regard, I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments. I am pleased to note that in our own time too new manifestations of this spirituality and devotion are not lacking" (RM 48). St. Montfort propagated a true devotion to Mary to help people to go to Christ and to inherit eternal life. But whenever people stray away from the true

path to the divine union, Mary, in virtue of her maternal charity and care for her children, appears in different places and at different times for conveying salvific messages. In most of her apparitions she invites the children of God to turn back to God through acts of repentance and deeds of compassionate love.

4. Blessed Mother's Solidarity and Popularity

In most of her apparitions she asks for a shrine to be built in a secluded place so that all people can come out of their comfort zone to partake in a communal prayer of solidarity and love. Although Vatican II instructs the faithful to practice Marian devotion with caution it does not object to those practices which produce God's kingdom values in the people of goodwill. Montfort was well aware that before the emergence of Marian devotion there were many means used by saintly men and women to reach God. However, he recommended Marian devotion as most reliable means because God himself used Mary to become human. If God has become human through Mary, why cannot humans become divine using the same means? After Vatican II there was decline in Marian devotion and the veneration of saints in the West. But recent rise in pilgrimages to Holy places affirm that Mary is an unavoidable figure to understand the love of God for humanity.

5. Blessed Mother's Intercessory Power

Her frequent apparitions confirm that she is the queen of the universe and there is an indissoluble bond between Jesus and Mary. She continues to utilize the privileges of her divine motherhood for helping human beings to successfully complete their pilgrimage of faith on earth. Since she is completely transformed

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into God, she no more lives rather Christ lives in her. Thus, every time she appears, she shows us the maternal love of God to the suffering and rejected human beings. We know that she is Mary and we also know that she is not God. It is no way a hindrance to a pure adoration only due to God when we utilize the privileges of her intercessory power. God hears our prayer but sometimes we do not understand why he takes more time than required. At these moments of uncertainty, we take recourse to Mary and ask her to join us in pressing God to yield to our prayers. Every believer is certain that Mary will not abandon us. While all his disciples abandoned Jesus fearing the same fate of Jesus will be pronounced on them, Mary stood by him not fearing what may happen. They called Jesus criminal, blasphemer, and false messiah and yet she kept crying that he was her son and her most beloved child. She was not afraid of undergoing the same fate as her son. This determination is most powerful and works well when she joins us in pressing God to hear our prayer. Montfort had experienced these special privileges of Mary, hence he recommended people to seek her help when God takes time to listen to our prayers. Vatican II too confirms the power of Mary's intercessory prayer. It means that, though we go to God directly and plead for his mercy on our own efforts we believe and are more assured when we do it through Mary. We have an assurance

that even if God is slow in responding to us because of Mary's persistence He may respond to us quickly.

Conclusion

Although the maternal spiritual power of Mary is underestimated by our separated brethren. We do not need Mary for our salvation, but it is not heretical to use the power of her intercessory prayer as spiritual support in the most hopeless moments of our life. This is what Montfort meant through his 'True Devotion to Mary'. Though there are many means to attain union with God going through the hands of Mary can be quick, easy, sure and short. Further, when we pray the Rosary, we are neither adoring Mary nor giving glory to her divine

motherhood rather by proclaiming aloud the wonders that God has done through Mary for our salvation thereby we give glory and honor to God. The Rosary is also a perfect reminder that God has taken the form of a slave to show his love for us and anyone who co-operates with God like Mary will attain perfection like her. Therefore St. Montfort vehemently affirms her principal virtues which continue to be an inspiring source to all who choose to quench the thirst of one's Devotion (TD 108), apart from various apparitions and messages revealed to a number of people in history. Thereby the church enjoys the Pleasure of honoring her Motherhood and encouraging the faithful to hold on to her as the perfect assurance to God.

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Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Iris Pongola

The universal symbol of the Christian faith, the Cross represents Christ's victory over death. The feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14th every year celebrates the redemptive transformation of a barbaric instrument of torture into a divine "tree of life" that brings hope to humankind. In some traditions, a cross is oriented to the cardinal directions to represent the universal nature of Christ's sacrifice and prayers are said for the salvation of all. The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, celebrates the Holy Cross as the instrument of our salvation. This instrument of torture, designed to degrade the worst of criminals, became the life-giving tree that reversed Adam's Original Sin when he ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden.

Cross-Christ's ultimate triumph

The Cross, because of what it represents is the most potent and universal symbol of the Christian faith. It is a constant reminder and witness of Christ's ultimate triumph, His victory over sin and death through His suffering and dying on the Cross. The cross, once a tool of death, has become a means to life; it gives strength to resist temptation, it gives hope to seek new life and it dispels fear and darkness.

As Christians, we exalt the Cross of Christ as the instrument of our salvation. Adoration of the Cross is, thus, adoration of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became Man, who suffered and died on the Cross for our redemption from sin and death. The cross represents the One Sacrifice by which Jesus, obedient even unto

death, accomplished our salvation. The cross is a symbolic summary of the Passion, Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

Believers have always looked to the cross in times of suffering. People in concentration camps, in prisons, in hospitals, in any place of suffering and loneliness, have been known to draw, trace, or form crosses and focus their eyes and hearts on them. The cross does not explain pain and misery. It does not give us any easy answers. But it does help us to see our lives united with Christ's. During this time when the entire world is suffering due to the attack of corona virus Pope Francis reminded the whole world that only in the cross of Christ we have healing and salvation by praying at the foot of the miraculous cross.

We often make the Sign of the Cross over ourselves. We make it before prayer to help fix our minds and hearts on God. We make it after prayer, hoping to stay close to God. In trials and temptations, the cross is a sign of strength and protection. The cross is the sign of the fullness of life that is ours. At Baptism, too, the Sign of the Cross is used; the priest, parents, and godparents make the sign on the forehead of the child. A sign made on the forehead is a sign of belonging. By the Sign of the Cross in Baptism, Jesus takes us as his own in a unique way. Today, let us look to the cross often. Let us make the Sign of the Cross and realize that we bring our entire self to God: our minds, souls, bodies, wills, thoughts, hearts, everything we are and will become.

O cross, you are the glorious sign of our victory.

In the Cross is salvation

Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in order to heal and bring wholeness to a broken people. This was God's way of showing the people that He was primarily a God who wanted to save and redeem and not condemn and destroy. The Church and especially the evangelist John interpreted this lifting of the bronze serpent by Moses as a foreshadowing of the salvation through Jesus when He was lifted up on the Cross. The Triumph of the Cross is the Triumph of Jesus Christ whose love for us and obedience to his Father climaxed with his death on the cross.

To the world this act of surrender on the cross was an act of utter humiliation and subjugation and the height of folly. To the world this death on the cross was a wasted life. To the world this death on the cross was a sign of utter defeat. But what the world calls wisdom, God calls foolishness, and what the world calls strength God calls weakness. Therefore God highly exalted the crucified one by raising him from the dead. God gave Jesus his own name so that every creature on earth must now call Jesus

“Lord.” What human beings did, God contradicted. And so in the weakness and foolishness of the cross we see the wisdom and power of God: Christ crucified. In him and his cross, surrender becomes power, waste becomes gain and death and defeat become victory and new life.

The cross is at the centre of our lives when we face sickness and death. The cross is at the centre of our lives in frailty and old age. The cross is at the centre of our lives every time we feel utterly alone and abandoned. The Cross is at the centre of our lives every time we are tempted to give in and give up. It is at the centre of our lives every time we are tempted to throw our hands up in despair. It keeps reminding us that only when we embrace the cross in the midst of suffering and abandonment can we understand the power of the resurrection. Only when we have the courage to keep focusing on the cross can we like Christ become victorious and conquer. Only when we embrace the cross it is possible for God to raise us up and give us new life.

JOKES

Student : Teacher! would you punish me for something I didn't do.

Teacher : No

Student : I didn't do my Homework.

Who said English is easy?

Fill this blank with 'Yes' or 'No'

1....I don't have a brain

2.... I don't have sense.

3.... I am stupid

The Queenship of Mary

Vinitha SRA

One of the most beautiful spiritual traditions in the Catholic Church, is the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary as “Queen” of Heaven and Earth. This title is ironic because this lowly young woman of Nazareth was neither born to a kingly family nor married to a king. Ever since the announcement of Angel Gabriel she struggled as wife and mother. The battle of life got tougher and harder because she had to be faithful to the *fiat* (I am the servant of the Lord). Her call was to live a life of sacrifice, render her service in charity and cooperate with Jesus in the redemptive plan of God. Thus, this queenship of Mary is comprehensible if and if only we understand the Kingship of Jesus.

There is a parallel between the emptying act of Jesus (Phl 1: 5-8) and the *fiat* of Mary (Lk 1:38). The essence of both these is surrendering to God's will. Jesus, the Word incarnate, is surrendered to God and Mary is surrendered to God. Mary belongs to God and Jesus belongs to Mary by virtue of her being the Mother of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Thus, Mary receives a share in the Kingship of Jesus. Now let us briefly look at the Kingship of Jesus.

The answer of Jesus to the question of Pilate, “are you the King of the Jews?” at the praetorium was that his Kingship does not belong to this world. However, Christ is King of a different type; by His Kingship, Christ has an internal and external influence upon our lives. The *interior influence* of supernatural life has the power of justification and sanctification. The *exterior influence* has the power to order our natural life to the glory of heaven.

It belongs to Jesus as Spiritual Ruler to set before us his subjects as our final goal in life that we should attain and to point out to us the means of attaining it. This is done by guiding the exterior and visible movement of the whole mystical Body to Eternal Happiness.

It is for Jesus Christ as King, in virtue of the work of Redemption which He accomplished, to defend His faithful subjects against the enemies who strive to overthrow His reign here below. These enemies too are of twofold – exterior and interior. The exterior enemies, who want to kill Jesus and destroy his Kingdom are opponents of his Gospels, be it persons, ideologies, philosophies, movements, organizations, etc. The interior enemy is our personal and community sin and vices and as well as the absence of virtues. Christ's Spiritual Kingship is a struggle against moral evil and this spiritual warfare must go on as long as humans remain here below exposed to suffering and death, to corruption and sin. Thus, just as Jesus the Redeemer and King and Mary as co-redeemer and Queen, by virtue of her being the Mother of the Savior, influences our will to choose the final goal and directs our actions to the attainment of that goal. This is precisely because her will is one with the will of the Father and Son and her constant reminder to us is, “do whatever he (Jesus) tells you (Jn 2:5).

The Queenship of Mary, like the Kingship of Christ, reflects a reign that extends to heaven and earth. We notice another parallel between Mary's Queenship and Christ's Kingship just as her Immaculate Heart is matching with the

Sacred Heart of Jesus. In fact, her very greatness, her promptness to assist those who seek her intercession, her participation in the redemptive act of Jesus, springs entirely from the second Person of the Holy trinity who took human form in the womb of Mary the immaculate. Though Mary does not stand and act alone, her continuing place in His life and salvific mission puts her above every created being, be it in heaven or on earth.

Pope Pius XII in an encyclical, *Ad Caeli Reginam*, which he released on October 11, 1954 wrote, "from the earliest ages of the Catholic church as Christian people, whether in time of triumph or more especially in time of crisis, has addressed prayers of petition and hymns of praise and veneration to the Queen of Heaven. And never has that hope wavered which they placed in the Mother of the Divine King, Jesus Christ; nor has that faith ever failed by which we are taught that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, reigns with a mother's solicitude

over the entire world, just as she is crowned in heavenly blessedness with the glory of a Queen". While instructing about the queenship of Mary on July 23, 1997, St. John Paul II, declared that "With this further recognition of her sublime dignity, the Christian people want to place her above all creatures, exalting her role and importance in the life of every person and of the whole world." The authoritative teachings of these Popes of the recent times sealed the centuries old faith of the common people.

Mary is assumed into heaven and crowned as queen of heaven and earth. This twin grace is the triumph of her sacrifice. She merited it by joining her will to the will of Jesus. Our confidence is that she would obtain a share in that merit, namely, a place in the kingdom of God through her intercession as Queen of heaven and earth. It is for Mary the Queen, as co-redeemer, to protect and defend from the snares of the devil all those redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.

JOKES

MISTAKE MISTAKE MISTAKE...

If a BARBER makes a mistake

It's a NEW STYLE,

If a POLITICIAN makes a mistake

It's a NEW LAW.

If a SCIENTIST makes a mistake

It's a NEW INVENTION,

If a TAILOR makes a mistake

It is a NEW FASHION,

If a TEACHER makes a mistake

It's a NEW THEORY,

If a STUDENT makes a mistake

It's a "MISTAKE"...

St. Monica, Patron Saint of Wives and Mothers

Sahaya Mary AC

“It is not possible that the son of so many tears should perish.”... [**Local Bishop to St .Monica**]

Saint Monica, also known as Monica of Hippo, is St. Augustine of Hippo's mother. She was born in 331 A.D. in *Tagaste*, which is present-day Algeria. When she was very young, she was married off to the Roman pagan Patricius, who shared his mother's violent temper. Patricius' mother lived with the couple and the duo's temper flares proved to be a constant challenge to young Monica. Monica obviously saw her prime duty as obedience to her husband, but her emotional refuge was in her prayer and her children. While Monica's prayers and Christian deeds bothered Patricius, he is said to have respected her beliefs.

Three children were born to Monica and Patricius: Augustine, Navigius, and Perpetua. Unfortunately, Monica was unable to baptize her children and when Augustine fell ill, Monica pleaded with Patricius to allow their son to be baptized. Patricius allowed it, but when Augustine was healthy again, he withdrew his permission. For years Monica prayed for her husband and mother-in-law, until finally, one year before Patricius' death, she successfully converted them. As time passed, Perpetua and Navigius entered the religious life, but unfortunately Augustine became lazy and uncouth. This greatly worried Monica, so when Patricius died, she sent the 17-year-old Augustine to Carthage for schooling.

While in Carthage, Augustine became a Manichaean, which was a major religion that

saw the world as light and darkness, and when one died, they were removed from the world of matter and returned to the world of light, which is where life comes from. His horrified mother tried to turn him away from this cult. He paid little attention and remained with them for nine years.

Years later in Milan, he met St. Ambrose and was greatly impressed by his preaching. He was baptized on the eve of Pascha in 38. After his baptism, Augustine and his mother planned to return to Africa. They reached the port of Ostia, the sea port for Rome. There they achieved peace together, in a [possibly visionary] conversion recorded by Augustine. They discussed silence and listening to the word of God.

For Monica, Augustine's conversion and baptism had fulfilled her deepest desires, and she saw little point in undertaking the long journey back to Africa; “I do not know what there is now left for me to do, or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled.” As if in answer to prayer, she fainted a few days later and was clearly and mortally ill. She abandoned her earlier desire to be buried with her husband and asked Augustine to bury her anywhere but always to remember her in his prayers. She died at the age of 56 in Ostia and was buried there.

There was no real cult of her as a saint until the Middle Ages. In 1430 her reputed remains were transferred by Pope Martin V to a shrine in the church of Sant' Agostino in Rome. In his Confessions addressing God, St. Augustine says, 'I shall not pass over whatever my soul

shall bring to birth concerning your servant who brought me to birth both in her body so that I was born into the light of time, and in her heart so that I was born into the light of eternity".

Here are some amazing facts about this incredible saint that are sure to inspire our faith in God's omnipotent power!

1) St. Monica's example converted her husband and mother-in-law

Even though the fourth-century saint was a Christian, her parents gave her away to a man named Patricius. Both he and his mother were pagans and had violent tempers. St. Monica endured this with patience and kindness, and her example eventually led to their conversions to Christianity.

2) She prayed for St. Augustine for 17 years before his conversion

Much of what St. Monica is known for is her persistence in prayer. Her son, St. Augustine of Hippo, lived a life of immorality, most notably that of lust and impurity, before converting to Catholicism. Throughout these years, she endured a tremendous amount of suffering. Augustine rejected her on multiple accounts, but she continued to love, pray and nurture her son throughout his wayward time.

3) She felt discouraged, but never gave up.

St. Monica cried many times over her son's transgressions, but received affirmation from God on several accounts. St. Monica had a dream in which she wept over her son, and a figure told her that he was still with her. In his autobiography, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, St. Augustine wrote, "that it was my soul's doom she was lamenting..." The figure told her to be at peace, and "see that where she was there I was also." She also received

encouragement from a local bishop, who told her that "God's time will come." He added, "Go now, I beg you; it is not possible that the son of so many tears should perish."

4) She knew her purpose in life.

St. Monica wept, prayed and sacrificed for her son for many years. Her greatest desire in life was to see her son's conversion to Catholicism, and once this happened, she believed her purpose in life had been fulfilled.

5) She is the patron saint of wives, mothers, conversions, alcoholics and abuse victims.

She is also the patron Saint of difficult marriages, disappointing children, victims of adultery, unfaithfulness, victims of abuse, conversion of relatives and Pangasinan [Province]. Especially in a time where conversion is needed in our world and we see the tragedy of abuse in our Church, St. Monica is a great example of faith and hope. God's grace is infinite, and he will never abandon us, even if it seems as if he is not present. Let us look to St. Monica's example of persistence—that God will never abandon us.

The Catholic Church celebrates the feast of St. Monica on August 27. She is particularly known for her perseverance in prayer.

Prayer:

O holy Monica by your burning tears and unceasing prayers
you saved your son from eternal damnation.
Obtain for us the grace ever to comprehend
what is most conducive to the salvation of our children
so that we may effectively restrain them from sin
and lead them by virtue and piety to Heaven.
Amen



Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (1 Pet 5:7).

Pope Francis



