

# Marian Synthesis

## I. OUR LADY AND THE BLESSED TRINITY

The saints are insistent on the necessity for distinguishing between the Three Divine Persons and for rendering to each one of them an appropriate attention. The Athanasian Creed is mandatory and strangely menacing in regard to this requirement, which proceeds from the fact that the final purpose of Creation and of the Incarnation is the glorification of the Trinity.

But how can so incomprehensible a mystery be even dimly probed? Assuredly by divine enlightenment alone, but this grace can confidently be claimed from her to whom, for the first time in the world, the doctrine of the Trinity was definitely intimated. That occasion was the epochal moment of the Annunciation. Through its high angel the Holy Trinity thus declared Itself to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; therefore the one that shall be born holy shall be called the Son of God"(Lk 1:35).

In this revelation all the Three Divine Persons are clearly specified: first, the Holy Ghost, to whom the operation of the Incarnation is attributed; second, the Most High, the Father of Him who is to be born; third, that Child who "shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High."(Lk 1:32)

The contemplation of Mary's different relations to the Divine Persons helps toward our distinguishing as between the Three.

To the Second Divine Person Mary's relation is the one nearest to our comprehension, that of Mother. But her motherhood is of a closeness, a permanency, and a quality infinitely surpassing the normal human relationship. In the case of Jesus and Mary the union of souls was primary, and of flesh secondary; so that even when separation of flesh occurred at birth, their union was not interrupted but went on into further incomprehensible degrees of intensity and association –such that Mary can be declared by the Church to be not only the "helpmate" of that Second Divine Person –Co-Redemptrix in Salvation, Mediatrix in grace –but actually "like unto Him."

Of the Holy Ghost, Mary is commonly called the temple or the sanctuary, but these terms are insufficiently expressive of the reality, which is that He has so united her to himself as to make her the next thing in dignity to Himself. Mary has been so taken up into the Holy Ghost, made one with Him, animated by him, that He is as her very soul. She is no mere instrument or channel of His activity; she is an intelligent, conscious co-operator with Him to such degree that when she acts, it is also He who acts; and that if her intervention be not accepted, neither is His.

The Holy Ghost is Love, Beauty, Power, Wisdom, Purity, and all else that is of God. If He descends in plenitude, every need can be met, and the most grievous problem can be brought into conformity with the Divine Will. The man who thus makes the Holy Ghost his helper (Ps. 77) enters into the tide of omnipotence. If one of the conditions for so attracting Him is the understanding of our Lady's relation to him, another vital condition is that we appreciate the Holy Ghost himself as real, distinct, Divine Person with His appropriate mission in regard to us. This appreciation of Him will not be maintained except there be a reasonably frequent turning of the mind to him. By including just that glance in His direction, every devotion to the Blessed Virgin can be made a wide-open way to the Holy Ghost. Especially can we so utilize the Rosary. Not only does the Rosary form a prime devotion to Our Lady, but, as well, its contents, the fifteen mysteries, celebrate the principal interventions of the Holy Ghost in the drama of Redemption.

Mary's relation to the Eternal Father is usually defined as that of Daughter. This title is intended to designate:

- her position as "the first of all creatures, the most acceptable child of God, the nearest and dearest to him (Cardinal Newman);
- The fullness of her union with Jesus Christ, which makes her enter into new relations to the Father, thereby entitling her to be mystically styled the Daughter of the Father. As Mother of God, says Lepicier,

- Mary contracts a certain affinity with the Father;
- The pre-eminent resemblance which she bears to the Father, which has fitted her to pour out into the world the everlasting light which issues from that loving Father.

But the title of “Daughter” may not sufficiently bring home to us the influence which her relation to the Father exerts on us who are His children and her children. “He has communicated to her His fruitfulness as far as a mere creature was capable of it, in order that He might give her the power to produce His Son and all the member of His Mystical Body” (St. Louis-Marie de Montfort). Her relation to the Father is a fundamental, ever-present element in the flow of life to every soul. It is the requirement of God that what He gives to man must be reflected in appreciation and co-operation. Therefore, that life-giving union must be made a subject of our thoughts, and so it is suggested that the *Pater Noster*, which is often on our lips, should take particular account of the intention. This prayer was composed by Jesus Christ Our Lord, and therefore it asks for the right things in the ideal way. If recited with the right advertence and in the spirit of the Catholic Church, it must accomplish perfectly its purpose of glorifying the Eternal Father and of acknowledging His overflowing gift to us through Mary.

“Let us recall here, as a proof of the dependence we ought to have on Our Blessed Lady, the example which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost give of this dependence.

The Father has not given and does not give His Son except by her. He has no children but by her, and communicates no graces but by her.

God the Son has not been formed and engendered except by her in union with the Holy Ghost; neither does He communicate His merits and His virtues except by her.

The Holy Ghost has not formed Jesus Christ except by her, neither does He form the members of our Lord’s Mystical Body except by her; and through her alone does He dispense His favours and His gifts.

After so many and such pressing examples of the Most Holy Trinity, can we without an extreme blindness dispense ourselves from Mary, and not consecrate ourselves to her, and depend on her?” (St. Louis-Marie de Montfort: *Treatise on True Devotion*, # 140)

## **II. GOD’S PLAN ABOUT MARY**

### 1. From the beginning and before the world she was in the mind of God

God himself it was who first began to tell of her and to sketch out for her a destiny unquestionably unique. For all the greatness of hers had a beginning very far back. It began before the constitution of the world. From the first, the idea of Mary was present to the Eternal Father along with that of the Redeemer, of whose destiny she formed part. Thus far back had God answered the doubter’s saying: “What need has God of Mary’s help?” God could have dispensed with her altogether, just as He might have dispensed with Jesus himself. But the course, which it pleased Him to adopt, included Mary. It placed her by the side of the Redeemer from the very moment in which the Redeemer was himself decreed. It went further; that plan assigned to her no less a part than that of Mother of the Redeemer and necessarily, therefore, of those united to him.

Thus from all eternity Mary was in a position exalted, alone among creatures, and utterly outside comparison even with the sublimest among them, different in the Divine idea, different in the preparation she received; and therefore fittingly singled out from all others in the first prophecy of Redemption, addressed to Satan: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and hers; she shall crush thy head, and thou shall strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). Here is the future Redemption summarized by God himself. Definitely, Mary is to be in an order of her own; even before her birth, and ever after, the enemy of Satan, “the great dragon, the ancient serpent” (Apoc. 12:9); below the Savoir, but next to Him, and like unto Him (Gen 2:18), Queen of angels (cf. Apoc. 12:1-12) and our mother (cf. Apoc. 12:17).

### 2. Vividly and unmistakably revealed in prophecy

The course of prophecy continues: “The Virgin”, “the Virgin and Child” (Is. 7:14), “the Woman”, “Woman and Child,” “the Queen seated at the right hand of the King (Ps. 44:10), the constantly recurring assurance that a woman is to be a prime element of our saving. What sort of future does this

foretell of her? Do not the very greatest things that can be said of her seem to follow logically on? Hardly do we realize how crushing, how conclusive is the bearing of prophecy on this question of the place of Mary in the Christian religion. A prophecy is a shadow of a thing to come, a glance which pierces time instead of space, a pale outline of a distant prospect. Necessarily, a prophecy must be less vivid, less clear, less real than the reality of which it speaks. But necessarily, too, it must preserve harmonious proportion with that reality. Prophecy which pictured Redemption as wrought by a Woman and her Child together (and no other with that pair), who crush the head of Satan, would be radically Inconsistent with an actual Redemption which relegates the woman to obscurity. Thus, if prophecy is truly named, and if Salvation is a lifelong working of the Incarnation and the death of Jesus Christ into the fabric of the human soul (and Holy Church and Holy Scripture jointly so declare); then in the Christian system Mary must be found with Jesus, inseparable from Him in His saving work, the New Eve, dependent on Him but necessary to Him –indeed no other than the Mediatrix of all Graces, as the Catholic Church sums up her gracious office. If what prophecy had glimpsed is really God's country, then those who belittle Mary are aliens to it.

### 3. The Annunciation shows her key-position

The culmination of the prophecies arrives; the fruition of her age-old destiny is now at hand.

Consider the awe-inspiring working out of the merciful design of God. Attend in spirit the greatest "Peace Conference" ever held. It is a Peace Conference between God and mankind, and it is called the Annunciation. In that Conference God was represented by one of His high Angels, and mankind was represented by her whose children we are privileged to be. She was but a gentle maiden, yet the fate of all mankind hung upon her in that day. The angel came with overwhelming tidings. He proposed to her the Incarnation. He did not merely notify it. Her liberty of choice was not violated; so that for a while the fate of mankind trembled in the balance. The Redemption was the ardent desire of God. But in this, as in all matters minor to it, He would not force the will of man. He would offer the priceless boon, but it was for man to accept it, and man was at liberty to refuse it. The moment had arrived to which all generations had looked forward, just as ever since all generations have looked back to it. It was the crisis of all time. There was a pause. That maiden did not accept at once; she asked a question, and the answer was given. There was another pause, and then she spoke the words: "Be it done unto me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38), those words that brought God down on earth and signed the great "Peace Pact" of humanity.

How few realize all that follows from that consent of hers. Even Catholics in the main do not realize the importance of the part that Mary played. The Doctors of the Church say these things: Supposing that maiden had refused the offer of motherhood that was made to her, the Second Divine Person would not have taken flesh in her. What a solemn thing that is! "What a terrible thought to think that God has made the entrance of the Redeemer dependent upon the 'Be it done unto me' (Lk 1:38) of the handmaid of Nazareth; that this saying should be the termination of the old world, the beginning of the new, the fulfillment of all prophecies, the turning-point of all time, the first blaze of the morning star which is to announce the rising of the sun of justice, which as far as human will was able to accomplish, knit the bond that brought Heaven down upon earth and lifted humanity up to God!" (Hettinger). What a solemn thing indeed! It means that she was the only hope of mankind. But the fate of men was safe in her hands. She pronounced that consent which, though we cannot fully understand, commonsense nevertheless tell us must have been inconceivably the most heroic act ever performed in the world –such that in all ages no other creature but she could have performed it. Then to her came the Redeemer; not to herself alone, but through her to poor helpless humanity, on behalf of whom she spoke. With him, she brought everything that the faith means, and the faith is the real life of men. Nothing else matters. Everything must be abandoned for it. Any sacrifices must be made to get it. It is the only thing in the world of any worth. Consider, therefore, that the faith of all generations (cf. Lk 1:48): those that have passed away up to the present, and the uncountable millions yet to come: the faith of all has depended on the words of that maiden.

### 4. The Son is always found with His Mother

It was God's will that the reign of grace should not be inaugurated without Mary. It was His pleasure that things should continue in the self-same way. When He desired to prepare St. John the Baptist for his mission of going before himself, He sanctified him by the charitable visit of His Blessed Mother in the Visitation. On the first Christmas night those who turned her from their doors

turned Him away. They did not realize that with her they refused Him whom they awaited. When the shepherd-representatives of the chosen people found the Promised of all Nations, they found Him with her. If they had turned away from her they would not have found him. At the Epiphany, the Gentile races of the world were received by our Lord in the persons of the three Kings, but they only found Him because they found her. If they had refused to approach her, they would not have reached him.

What had been done in secret at Nazareth had to be confirmed openly in the Temple. Jesus made offering of himself to the Father but it was between the arms and by the hands of his Mother. For that babe belonged to its Mother; without her the Presentation could not be made.

Proceed, and it is learned from the Fathers that Our Lord did not enter upon His public life without her consent. Likewise her request at Cana of Galilee was the beginning of the signs and wonders and mighty deeds by which He proved His mission.

#### 5. On Calvary

When the last scene came on Calvary, which finished the awful drama of Redemption, Jesus hung upon the tree of the Cross and Mary stood beneath it, not merely because she was a fond Mother, not in any accidental way, but precisely in the same capacity as she was present at the Incarnation. She was there as the representative of all mankind, ratifying her offering of her Son for men's sake. Our Lord did not offer himself to the Father without her assent and offering made on behalf of all her children; the Cross was to be His Sacrifice and her Sacrifice.

#### 6. The Holy Ghost operates always with her

Come a little further to the feast of Pentecost –the tremendous occasion when the Church was launched upon its mission. Mary was there. It was by her prayer that the Holy Ghost descend on the Mystical Body and came to abide in it with all his “greatness, power, glory, victory and majesty” (I Chron 29:11).

Mary reproduces in respect of the Mystical Body of Christ every service which she rendered to His actual Body. This law applies to Pentecost, which was a sort of new Epiphany. She is necessary to the one as she had been to the other. And so of all divine things to the end: if Mary is left out, God's Plan is not conformed to, no matter what one's prayers and works and striving may be. If Mary is not there, the grace is not given. This is an overpowering thought.

It may provoke the question: “Do those who ignored or insult Mary receives no graces?” They do, indeed, receive graces, for failure to acknowledge Mary may be excused on grounds of utter ignorance. But what a sorry title to Heaven! And what a way of treating her who helps us! Moreover, the graces which come in such circumstances are but a fraction of what should flow, so that one's life's work is largely failing.

### III. MARY'S PRIVILEGES

#### 1. Mary Immaculate

All have sinned in Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12), not Our Lady however who, thanks to a special privilege, was preserved from the original sin by the advanced application of the merits of the one she calls “my saviour” (Lk 1:47). She needed the Redeemer in order to be better redeemed than us.

The Immaculate Conception is referred to by God in the same sentence in which Mary herself is first promised to us; and, together with the privilege, prophecy is made of its heavenly sequel: the Divine Maternity, the crushing of the serpent's head in Redemption, and Mary's Motherhood of men.

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shall strike His heel.” (Gen 3:15)

To these words, addressed to Satan by Almighty God, the faithful turn as their source of confidence and strength in warfare with sin. They aim with all their heart to become in fullness the seed, the children of Mary, for there is the pledge of victory. In the measure that we make her more and more our mother, is our enmity with the powers of evil intensified and victory made more complete.

#### 2. Mary Mother of God and our Mother

All the titles and glories of Mary stem from her divine maternity. She is Immaculate, full of grace, co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix because she is the Mother of God. Her divine maternity places her on such an exalted level that St. Thomas did not hesitate to say that it bestowed upon her a certain infinite dignity (1 25, 6 ad 4). And Cajetan says that Mary touches the boundaries of divinity. There is no other creature that has as great an affinity with God. Because of her divine maternity, Mary is an intimate part of the hypostatic union, and hence she enters into the Incarnation of the Word and the Redemption of the human race as an essential element. But the hypostatic union infinitely surpasses the order of grace and glory; therefore, the divine maternity surpasses the adoptive filiation through grace, because adoption establishes only a spiritual and mystical relationship, while the divine maternity establishes a relationship of nature and of blood with Jesus Christ, as well as one of affinity with the Blessed Trinity. The divine maternity, which terminates in the uncreated person of the Word made flesh, surpasses, by reason of its end, the grace and glory of all the elect and the plenitude of grace and glory received by Mary herself. It surpasses all the graces *gratis datae* and the charisms, because these graces are less than sanctifying grace.

Mary became the Mother of Christ and our mother when to the Angel's salutation she pronounced her meek assent, "behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38). That motherhood of hers was proclaimed at the moment when it reached its complete expansion, that is, when Redemption was consummated. Amid the sorrows of Calvary Jesus said to her from the cross: "Woman, behold thy son" and to St. John, "Behold thy mother" (Jn 19:26-27). Through St. John, these words were addressed to all the elect. Fully cooperating by her consent and sorrows in this spiritual birth of mankind, Mary became in the fullest and most perfect sense our mother.

Truly her children, we must behave as such, and indeed as very little children dependent utterly upon her. We must look to her to feed us, to guide us, to teach us, to cure our ailments, to console us in our grieves, to counsel us in our doubts, to recall us when we wander, so that wholly confided to her care, we may grow to the resemblance of our elder brother, Jesus, and share His mission of combating sin and conquering it.

### 3. Mary Coredeptrix

St. Paul wrote: "Sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned ... Adam prefigured the One to come. The gift [of the Redemption] itself considerably outweighed the fall. If it is certain that through one man's fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to so many as an abundant free gift. The results of the gift also outweigh the results of one man's sin" (Rom. 5:5-12; 15-16). Given the fact that the truth of the contrast between the old Adam and the new Adam, Jesus Christ, was elucidated by St. Paul, it is natural to conclude that the Apostle was aware of a similar contrast between the old Eve and the new Eve, Mary, the Mother of God. Indeed, sin entered the world as a result of choices based on the free wills of both the old Eve and the old Adam. So God arranged for the grace of Salvation to come into the world through the choices based on the free wills of the new Eve and the new Adam.

No human's wisdom can grasp the depth of Mary's self-abandoning love of God, which caused her to show deep obedience to the Heavenly father as His handmaid, from the moment of the Annunciation to the moment of the Redemption by her son Jesus on the Cross.

Her first public action as such a unique co-operator of the Redeemer which is recorded by the Scripture was her presentation of Baby Jesus to God in the temple, on the 40th day of the Redeemer's birth, "according to the law of Moses" (Lk 2:22). Then, she offered Jesus to God by exercising her parental rights over her divine son. Then, the upright old prophet Simeon, foretold the mystery of her mission as the Coredeptrix to her: "You see this child, He is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected. And a sword will pierce your own soul, too" (Lk 2:34-35).

How many tears the Holy Mother Mary shed when she witnessed Jesus suffering on the Cross! The intensity of her sufferings is beyond any human being's ability to imagine. Her sufferings at the foot of the Cross were, in a mystical sense, the pains of childbearing, which she offered to become the mother of the Christians destined to be saved in accordance with the plan of God.

Be it a natural human mother or our Heavenly Mother, the definition of *a mother* is the same: she is the one who suffered the pangs of childbirth in giving birth to a person. This definition applies to Mary perfectly, because her sufferings in giving full consent to the immolation of Jesus were the

mystical pangs of childbearing for us Christians. First she conceived Jesus, the head of the Mystical Body, in her chaste womb, and then through the process of her Coredemption on Calvary, she began to give birth to the members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

This profound mystery of Mary's motherhood for Christians was prophetically indicated in the Scripture. "God told the Woman: I will multiply your pains of childbearing. You shall give birth to your children in pain"(Gen 3:16). These divine words do not primarily concern the pangs of childbirth of ordinary women. In this verse, that immediately follows the announcement of the Redeemer, God was prophesying the Holy Mother Mary's sufferings at the foot of the Cross. And in the same way the Apocalypse says: "Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a Woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with twelve stars on her head for a crown.

She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth" (Apoc. 12:1-2).

The Bible says: "Near the Cross of Jesus stood His Mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala"(Jn 19:25). This means that the two other women, also named Mary, were standing, while weeping at the sight of the crucified Jesus. But the tears of the women of Jerusalem (cf. Lk 23:27) and of the two other Marys were shed out of mere sympathy for Jesus' sufferings, so there is no profound meaning in their tears. In sharp contrast, the tears of the Blessed Virgin were the tears which resulted from her spiritual pains when she gave full consent to the Sacrifice of her divine Son Jesus and offered Him up to the Heavenly Father as the mother of the Redeemer of mankind. The tears of the Holy Mother Mary were the tears of Coredemption.

"As truly as she suffered and almost died with her suffering Son, so truly did she renounce her maternal right over that Son for the sake of our salvation, and immolate Him, as far as with her lay, to placate God's justice. Hence it may justly be said that with Christ she redeemed the human race" (Pope Benedict XV).

#### 4. Mary Mediatrix of all graces

Our trust in Mary must be limitless, knowing that by the ordinance of God, her power is without limit. All that He could give to Mary, He has given to her. All that she was capable of receiving she has received in plenitude. For us God has constituted her a special means of grace. Operating in union with her we approach Him more effectively, and hence win grace more freely. Indeed we place ourselves in the very flood-tide of grace, for she is the spouse of the Holy Ghost; she is the channel of every grace which Jesus Christ has won and as her Mother, she keeps exercising her motherhood of grace over the Church, His Mystical Body.

"Judge as to the ardent love with which God would have us honour Mary seeing that He has set in her the fullness of all good: in such manner that all we have of hope, all of graces, all of salvation, all -I say and let us doubt it not- flows to us from her" (St. Bernard: Sermo de Aquaeductu).

## IV. DEVOTION TO MARY

### 1. The imitation of Mary's humility

St. Paul often speaks to the faithful in terms of an army and battles. This is fitting, for the Church is the instrument and visible operation of her who is like an army in battle array and who wages an intense warfare for the soul of every man. Our warfare is not of this world, and must be waged according to the tactics of Heaven.

Christ, says St. Thomas Aquinas, recommended to us humility above all things, for thereby is removed the chief impediment to the salvation of men. All the other virtues derive their value from it. Only when humility exists will God bestow His favours. When it fades, those gifts will be withdrawn. The Incarnation, the source of all graces, depended on it. Mary says, in the "Magnificat," that in her God has shown might in His arm, that is, He has exerted in her His very omnipotence. And she proclaims the reason. It was her lowliness which had won His regard and brought Him down to terminate the old world and begin the new.

But how could Mary be a model of humility, considering that her treasury of perfections was altogether immeasurable –touching in fact the very borders of infinity, and that she knew it? She was humble because she was likewise aware that she was more perfectly redeemed than any other of the children of men. She owed every gleam of her inconceivable sanctity to the merits of her Son, and that thought was ever vivid in her mind. Her peerless intellect was full of the realization that as she had received more, so no other creature stood as much in God's debt as she. Hence her attitude of

exquisite and graceful humility was effortless and constant.

Studying her, therefore, the faithful will learn that the essence of true humility is the recognition and unaffected acknowledgement of what one really is before God; the understanding that one's worthlessness alone is one's own. Everything else is God's free gift to the soul: His to increase, diminish, or withdraw completely, just as He alone gave it.

In the faithful practice of the spirit of dependence upon Mary will be found a supreme, simple, comprehensive way of humility – what St. Louis—Marie de Montfort terms “a little-known secret of grace, enabling us quickly and with but little effort to empty ourselves of self, fill ourselves with God and become perfect.”

Let us consider how this is so. The faithful, in turning towards Mary, must necessarily turn away from self. Mary takes hold of this movement and elevates it; makes of it the supernatural dying to self which fulfils the stern but fruitful law of the Christian life (Jn 12:24-25). The humble Virgin's heel crushes the serpent of self, with its many heads:

- of self-exaltation; for if Mary, so rich in perfections as to be called by the Church the Mirror of Justice, endowed with unbounded power in the realm of grace, is nevertheless found on her knees – the humblest handmaid of the Lord! – what must be our place and attitude;
- of self-seeking; for, having given himself and all his goods, spiritual and temporal, to Mary to use as she thinks fit, the faithful continues to serve her in the same spirit of complete generosity;
- of self-sufficiency; for the habit of leaning on Mary inevitably produces distrust of one's own unaided powers;
- of self-conceit; for the sense of partnership with Mary brings realization of one's own inadequacy. What has the faithful contributed to that partnership but painful weakness!
- of self-love; for what is there to love! The faithful, absorbed in love and admiration of his Queen, is little inclined to turn from her to contemplate himself;
- of self-satisfaction; for in this alliance higher standards must prevail. The models himself upon Mary and aspires to her perfect purity of intention;
- of self-advancement; thinking with Mary's thoughts, one studies God alone. There is no room for plans of self or reward;
- of self-will; completely submitted to Mary, the faithful distrusts the promptings of his own inclinations and in all things listens intently for the whispering of grace.

In the faithful, who is truly forgetful of self, there will be no impediment to the maternal influences of Mary. She will develop in him energies and sacrifices beyond nature, and make of him a good soldier of Christ (2 Tim 2:3), fit for the arduous service to which that profession calls him.

## 2. True Devotion to Mary according to St. Louis Marie de Montfort

True Devotion to Mary requires the formal entry into a compact with Mary whereby one gives to her one's whole self, with all its thoughts and deeds and possessions, both spiritual and temporal, past, present, and future, without the reservation of the smallest part or lightest little thing. In a word, the giver places himself in a condition equivalent to that of a slave possessing nothing of his own, and wholly dependent on, and utterly at the disposal of Mary.

But the earthly slave is far freer than the slave of Mary. The former remains master of his thoughts and inner life, and thus may be free in everything that matters to him. But the surrender to Mary bears with it everything:

each thought, the movement of the soul, the hidden riches, the inmost self – on to the final breath – is committed to her that she may expend it all for God. It is a sort of martyrdom, the sacrifice of self to God, with Mary as the altar of that sacrifice. How conformed, indeed, to the sacrifice of Christ himself, which likewise began in Mary's bosom, was publicly confirmed in the arms of Mary uplifted in the presentation, embraced every moment of His life, and was consummated on Calvary on the cross of Mary's heart.

The true Devotion is inaugurated by a formal Act of Consecration, but it consists principally in the subsequent living of that Consecration. The True Devotion must represent not an act but a state. Unless Mary takes possession of all the life, and not merely of minutes and hours of that life, The Act of Consecration—even though frequently repeated—has but the value of a passing prayer. It is like a tree which has been planted, but which has never taken root.

But this does not mean that the mind has to remain ever fixed upon the Consecration. Just as one's physical life is governed by one's breathing or by the beating of one's heart, even though these operations are not consciously viewed, so it is with the True Devotion. Even though not adverted to, it works incessantly on the life of the soul. It suffices if the idea of Mary's ownership is now and then made vivid by deliberate thought, by acts and ejaculation; provided that the fact of one's dependence on her remains permanently acknowledge, always at least vaguely present to the mind and put into force in a general way in all the circumstances of one's life.

If there is a warmth in all this, it can be a help. But if not, it does not affect the value of the Devotion.

Oftentimes, in fact, warmth makes things soft and not dependable.

Mark this well: the True Devotion does not depend on fervour or emotions of any kind. Like every lofty edifice, it may at times burn in sunshine, while its deep foundations are cold like the rock they rest on.

Reason is commonly cold. The best resolve may be icy. Faith itself can be chill as a diamond. Yet these are the foundations of the True Devotion. Set in them, the latter will abide; and the frost and the storm, which cause mountains to crumble, will only leave it the stronger.

The graces which have attended the practice of the True Devotion, and the position it has attained in the devotional life of the Church, would reasonably appear to indicate that it represents an authentic message from Heaven, and this is precisely what St. Louis-Marie de Montfort claimed it to be. He attached to it immense promises, and he asserted most positively that those promises would be fulfilled if the conditions which govern them are fulfilled.

And as to the everyday experience: speak to those whose practice of the Devotion is more than a surface affair, and see with what complete conviction they speak of what it has done for them. Ask them if they may not be the victims of their feelings or imagination. Always they will declare that there is no question of it; the fruits have been too evident to admit of their being deceived.

If the sum of the experience of those, who teach, and understand, and practice the True Devotion is of value, it seems unquestionable that it deepens the interior life, sealing it with special character of unselfishness and purity of intention. There is a sense of guidance and protection: a joyful certainty that now one's life is being employed to the best advantage. There is a supernatural outlook, a definite courage, a firmer faith, which make one a mainstay of any enterprise. There is a tenderness and a wisdom which keep strength in its proper place. There is, too, the protectress of them all, a sweet humility. Graces come which one cannot but realize are out of the common. Frequently, there is a call to a great work, which is patently beyond one's merits and natural capacity. Yet with it come such helps as enable that glorious but heavy burden to be borne without faltering. In a word, in exchange for the splendid sacrifice which is made in the True Devotion by selling oneself into this species of slavery, there is gained the hundredfold which is promised to those who despoil themselves for the greater glory of God. When we serve, we rule; when we give, we have; when we surrender ourselves we are victors.

Some persons appear to reduce their spiritual life very simply to a matter of selfish gain or loss. These are disconcerted by the suggestion that they should abandon their treasures even to the Mother of our souls. Such as the following is heard: "If I give everything to Mary, will I not at the hour of my departure from this life stand empty-handed before my Judge, and therefore perhaps have to go for a vast time into Purgatory?" To this, a commentator quaintly answers: "No, not at all, since Mary is present at the Judgment!" The thought contained in this remark is profound.

But the objection to making the Consecration is usually due less to a purely selfish outlook than to perplexity. There is difficulty in understanding how those things for which one is bound in duty to pray, such as one's family, one's friends, one's country, the Pope, etc., will fare if one makes the unreserved gift of one's spiritual treasures. Let all these misgivings be put aside, and let the Consecration be boldly made. Everything is safe with Our Lady. She is the guardian of the treasures of God himself. She is capable of being the guardian of the concerns of those who place their trust in her. So together with the assets of your life, cast all its liabilities—its obligations and duties

—into that great sublime heart of hers. In her relations with you, she acts in a manner as if she had no other child but you. Your salvation, your sanctification, your multiple needs are peremptorily present to her. When you pray for her intentions, you yourself are her first intentions.

But here, where one is being urged to make sacrifice, is not the place to seek to prove that there is



no loss whatever in the transaction. For to prove this would sap the very foundation of the offering and deprive it of the character of sacrifice on which its value depends. It will suffice to recall that once upon a time a multitude often or twelve thousand were in a desert, and were hungry (Jn 6:1-14). In all that number only one person had brought food with him. What he possessed amounted to five loaves and two fishes and he was asked to give them up for the common good; and he did with willingness. Then those few loaves and fishes were blessed and broken and distributed to the multitude. And in the end all that immense throng did eat, until they could eat no more; and among them he who had given the original seven items of food. And yet what remained over filled twelve baskets, full and to overflowing! Now supposing that individual had said: "What good will these few loaves and fishes be to so great a multitude? Besides, I require them for the members of my family here with me and oppressed by hunger. I cannot give." But no! He gave and he and his people receive far more from the miraculous repast than they had contributed to it. And no doubt they had a form of claim to the twelve basketfuls, if they desired to assert it.

Such is always the way of Jesus and Mary with the princely soul which gives its possessions without reserve or stipulation. The gift avails to satisfy the wants of a vast throng. Yet, one's own needs and intentions, which had appeared to suffer, are filled to overflowing and still the Divine bounty lies scattered about.

Let us, then, hasten to Mary with our poor loaves and fishes, and press then into her arms, so that Jesus and she may multiply them to feed the souls of the millions hungering in the arid desert of this world.

The form of one's ordinary prayers and actions need not be changed as a result of the making of the Consecration. The customary paths of life may be pursued, and one may continue to pray for one's usual intentions and for all special purposes, but subject in future to Mary's good pleasure.

"Mary shows us her Divine son and addresses to us the same invitation that she did of old to the serving men at Cana: 'Do whatever he tells you'" (Jn 2:5). If at her command we pour into the vessels of Charity and Sacrifice the tasteless water of the thousand details of our everyday actions the miracle of Cana is renewed. The water is changed into a delicious wine, that is to say, into choicest graces for ourselves and for others" (Cousin).

### 3. Live with Mary!

Some may take alarm and say it is a slight to God to credit such a universal power to a creature. But if it has pleased God to make it so, how does it slight His dignity? How foolish it would sound were anyone to say that the force of gravity derogates from God's power! That law of gravity is from God, and accomplishes His purposes throughout all nature. Why should one think it disrespectful to allow as much to Mary in the universe of Grace? If the laws which God has made for nature show forth His might, why should the law which He has made for Mary do otherwise than manifest His goodness and omnipotence?

But even if it is conceded that acknowledgment is due to Mary, there still remains the question of its manner and amount. "How" –some will say –"am I to apportion prayer to Mary and prayer to the Divine Persons or the saints? What is the exact amount –neither too much nor too little –which I am to offer to her?" Others will go further and their objection will present itself as follows: "Would I not turn away from God were I to direct my prayers to her?"

All these grades of doubt proceed from applying earthly ideas to heavenly things. Such persons are thinking of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, and of Mary and the saints, as if they were so many statues, so that to turn to one they must necessarily turn away from others.

Have her before the mind, at least in some slight way, at all times. Unite the intention and the will to hers in such fashion that every act done during the day, every prayer you utter, is done with her. She should be left out nothing. Whether you pray to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit, or to a saint, it is always to be prayer in union with Mary. She repeats the words with you. Her lips and your lips form the words together, and in everything she has a part. Thus she is far more than at your side. She is, as it were, in you; your life is you and she together giving to God all you jointly have.

This all-embracing form of devotion to Mary acknowledges handsomely the part she played and daily continues to play in the workings out of salvation. Likewise it is the easiest devotion to her.

"With Mary live joyfully, with Mary bear all your trials, with Mary labour, with Mary pray, with Mary take your recreation, with Mary take your repose. With Mary seek Jesus; in your arms bear

Jesus and with Jesus and Mary fix your dwelling at Nazareth. With Mary go to Jerusalem, remain near the Cross of Jesus, bury yourself with Jesus. With Jesus and Mary rise again, with Jesus and Mary mount to Heaven, with Jesus and Mary live and die” (Thomas a Kempis: Sermon to Novices).

#### 4. Real devotion to Mary obliges apostleship

The various offices which Mary fulfilled, of nourishing, tending, and loving the actual body of her Divine Son, are still her offices in regard to each member of the Mystical Body, the least brethren as well as the most honourable. So that, when “the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:25), they do not act independently of Mary, even when, through thoughtlessness or ignorance, they fail to recognize her presence. They but join their efforts to Mary’s efforts. It is already her work, and she has been exquisitely busied on it from the time of the Annunciation to this very day.

If we want, like St. John the beloved disciple, to take Mary to our own (Jn 19:27), it must be in her completeness. If we are willing to accept only a phase of her being, we may hardly receive her at all. Obviously devotion to her must attend to and try to reproduce every aspect of her personality and mission. It must not chiefly

concern itself with what is not the most important. For instance, it is valuable to regard her as our exquisite model whose virtues we must draw into ourselves. But to do that and to do no more would be a partial and indeed a petty devotion to her. Neither is it enough to pray to her, even though it be in considerable quantity. Nor is it enough to know and rejoice at the innumerable and startling ways in which the Three Divine Persons have encompassed her, and built upon her, and caused her to reflect her own attributes. All these tributes of respect are due to her and must be given to her, but they are no more than parts of the whole. Adequate devotion to her is only achieved by union with her. Union necessarily means community of life with her; and her life does not consist mainly in the claiming of admiration but in the communicating of grace.

Her whole life and destiny have been motherhood, first of Christ and then of men. For that she was prepared and brought into existence by the Holy Trinity after an eternal deliberation (as St. Augustine remarks). On the day of the Annunciation she entered on her wondrous work and ever since she has been the busy mother attending to her household duties. For a while these were contained in Nazareth, but soon the little house became the whole wide world, and her Son expanded into mankind. And so it has continued; all the time her domestic work goes on and nothing in that Nazareth-grown-big can be performed without her. Any caring of the Lord’s body is only supplement to her care; the apostle only adds himself to her maternal occupation; and in that sense Our Lady might declare: “I am Apostleship,” almost as she said: “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

That motherhood of souls being her essential function and her very life, it follows that without participation in it there can be no real union with her. Therefore, let the position be stated once for all: true devotion to Mary must comprise the service of souls. Mary without motherhood and the Christian without apostleship, would be analogous ideas. Both the one and the other would be incomplete, unreal, unsubstantial, false to the Divine intention.

Moreover, Mary cannot do without that help. But surely this suggestion goes too far? How could the Virgin so powerful be dependent on the aid of persons so weak? But, indeed, such is the case. It is a part of the divine arrangement which requires human co-operation and which does not save man otherwise than through man. It is true that Mary’s treasury of grace is superabundant, but she cannot spend from it without our help. Is she could use her power according to her heart alone, the world would be converted in the twinkling of an eye. But she has to wait till the human agencies are available to her. Deprived of them, she cannot fulfill her motherhood, and souls starve and die.

“Many souls go to Hell because nobody pray and sacrifice for them” (OL. of Fatima).

“Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother (Mk 3:35). What a marvel! What an honour! To what a height of glory Jesus elevates us! The women proclaim as most happy her who brought Him into the world; but what prevents them from participating in that same maternity? For here the Gospel speaks of a new mode of generation, a new parenthood” (St. John Chrysostom).

“As St. Paul assures us that he fills up the sufferings of Christ, so we may say in truth that a true Christian, who is a member of Jesus Christ and united with Him by grace, continues and carries to completion, by every action performed in the spirit of Jesus Christ, the actions which Jesus Christ himself performed during the time of His peaceful life on earth. So that when a Christian prays, he

continues the prayer of Jesus during His life on earth. So that when a Christian prays, he continues the prayer of Jesus during His life on earth. When he works, he makes up what was wanting to the life and conversation of Jesus. We must be like so many Christs upon earth, continuing His life and His actions, doing and suffering all in the spirit of Jesus, that is to say in holy and divine dispositions" (St. John Eudes: Kingdom of Jesus).

##### 5. No true Christianity without Mary

She who brought Christianity on earth cannot be denied a place on Christian worship. In return for this infinite gift all generations must henceforth call that maiden blessed (Lk 2, 48).

But what of the many people in this world who hold her cheaply, the many who slight her, the many who do worse? Have they not read that a sword would pierce Our Lady's Immaculate Heart "that the thoughts of many hearts be revealed,, (Lk 2:35), indicating that devotion to Mary would be the clear sign of the true followers of Jesus Christ? Does it ever occur to those people to think that every grace they have they owe to her? Do they ever reason that if they were excluded from her words of acceptance that night, then Redemption has never come on earth for them? In that supposition they would stand outside its scope. In other words, they would not be Christian at all, even though they may cry: "Lord! Lord!" all the day and every day (Mt 7:21). And on the other hand, if they are indeed Christians, and if the gift of life has come to them, then it has only come because she gained it for them, because they were included in her acceptance. In a word, the Baptism that makes a person a child of God makes one simultaneously a child of Mary.

Gratitude, therefore – a practical gratitude – to Mary must be the mark of every Christian. Redemption is the joint gift of the Father and of Mary. Therefore, with the words of thanks to the Father must go up the word of thanks to Mary.

## **V. CONCLUSION: IF MARY WERE BUT KNOWN!**

Father Faber says that Mary is not half enough known or loved, with sad results for souls: "Devotion to her is low and thin and poor. It has no faith in itself. Hence it is that Jesus is not loved, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that the sacraments are not rightly frequented, or souls enthusiastically evangelised. Jesus is obscured because Mary is kept in the background. Thousand of souls perish because Mary is withheld from them. It is the miserable unworthy shadow which we call our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the saints, God is pressing for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to His Blessed Mother... Let a man but try it for himself, and his surprise at the graces it brings with it, and the transformations it causes in his soul, will soon convince him of its otherwise almost incredible efficacy as a means for the salvation of men, and for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ."

"To the powerful Virgin it is given to crush the serpent's head; to souls who are united to her, it is given to overcome sin. In this we must believe with an unshaking faith, with a firm hope.

God is willing to give us all. All now depends on us, and on you by whom all is received and reassured up, by whom all is transmitted, O Mother of God! All depends on the union of men with her who receive all from God." (Gratry)

Virgo praedicanda! Mary must be taught to all men!