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# **To Jesus Through Mary: History and Theology**

A Thesis

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# **To Jesus through Mary: History and Theology**

## **Introduction**

In 1987 Pope John Paul II proclaimed a Marian Year that was to begin on the Solemnity of Pentecost and to end the following year on the Solemnity of the Assumption 1988. The purpose of the Marian Year was to promote a new and careful reading of what the Second Vatican Council said about Mary, to which he devoted the contents of the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*. In this encyclical the Pope spoke not only of the doctrine of faith but also of the life of faith and of an authentic Marian spirituality. He acknowledged there are many rich sources of Marian spirituality in the various Christian communities but he wished to recall specifically St. Louis de Montfort and his devotion "to Christ through the hands of Mary" as a solid point of reference to follow. John Paul said:

Marian spirituality, like its corresponding devotion, finds a very rich source in the historical experience of individuals and of the various Christian communities present among the different peoples and nations of the world. In this regard, I would like to recall, among the many witnesses and teachers of this spirituality, the figure of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments.<sup>1</sup>

### **Purpose of this study**

Following John Paul II's recommendation to follow St. Louis de Montfort as a guide to Marian spirituality I have taken as the topic of this study the expression "to Jesus through Mary" which is attached to Montfort. The explicit purpose of this study is to analyze the devotion "to Jesus through Mary" in order to demonstrate that it does not begin with Montfort. It has an ancient and well-documented history rooted in Scripture

and the Tradition of the Church. Second, to show how Montfort developed this devotion most fully. Third, to see how John Paul II, under the influence of Montfort, presents this devotion to a contemporary audience. Fourth, to compare the thought of Montfort and John Paul II to determine in what ways their thought converges as well as the way in which John Paul makes a significant departure from the traditional way of presenting this devotion. Finally, we will address and answer the root difficulties raised by both Catholics and non-Catholics alike in regard to the devotion to Jesus through Mary.

### **The Method**

The method I utilize in chapter one is an historical survey of the texts of the significant authors who were proponents of the devotion to Jesus through Mary as it has been handed down through the centuries in the form of many different expressions. In chapter two and three I analyze the way in which St. Louis de Montfort and then John Paul II present this devotion in order to illustrate the unique manner in which each author understands and explains the expression “to Jesus through Mary.” I have attempted not to superimpose any foreign structure on their presentations. Rather each analysis has emerged from a continuous and careful reading and re-reading of the texts themselves. Chapter four is a comparative investigation of the way in which Montfort and John Paul illustrate the main themes in this devotion and the language they use to do so. From this comparison I highlight what I consider to be two primary points of convergence and two important nuances or differences between John Paul II and St. Louis de Montfort. Due to Montfort’s influence on the Mariology of John Paul II, it is correct to expect almost countless similarities between them. Since it is not the overall purpose of this paper to

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston MA, 1987, article 48.

catalog every similarity and difference, I have limited the discussion of the convergence and departure to those that are most applicable for a study of the expression to Jesus through Mary.

At this point it is important to explain my rationale for moving from Montfort to John Paul II in the historical aspects. This devotion reached a highpoint of development in St. Louis de Montfort, but his treatise on *True Devotion* was hidden in a field and not found until 1842. Since its finding it has had a significant impact on the Church. Since its publication it has run into hundreds of editions in over twenty languages.<sup>2</sup> It has influenced many great proponents of Marian devotion since its rediscovery, such as St. Maximilian Kolbe and the founder of the Legion of Mary, Frank Duff, just to name a couple. This said, I have chosen to focus the third chapter on John Paul II for the following reasons. He has been raised to the Chair of St. Peter in which he holds the eminent teaching position in the Catholic Church. He was thoroughly influenced by Montfort in his theology and devotion to Mary. But paramount among my reasons is the fact that John Paul II has retrieved Montfort for people of today. John Paul also makes a significant contribution to this devotion in the way he describes the relationship between the Christian and Mary and how this relationship is to be lived. I have limited the chapter on John Paul II to an analysis of his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*. Though he has written and preached extensively on Mary, *Redemptoris Mater* is a summary of his Mariology and its corresponding devotion. I should also note that I weave into this analysis of *Redemptoris Mater* salient points from the series of seventy general audiences on Mary,

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<sup>2</sup> *God Alone*, p. 290.



entitled *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple*, given by John Paul II between September 1995 and November 1997.<sup>3</sup>

Once we have presented the historical survey of the devotion known as “to Jesus through Mary” we will go on in Part II to present a reflection on the theological foundations of this spirituality in the contemporary context. There we will pinpoint the main obstacle that stands in the way of this devotion being more widely accepted and practiced. Then provide a reasoned foundation for this devotion based on the economy of salvation, the mystery of the Incarnation and the truths that become evident in regard to the human person based on a proper understanding of the Incarnation.

### **Sources**

For the historical analysis of this study I have used texts from similar studies conducted by such authors as René Laurentin, Théodore Koehler, Luigi Gambero, Deyanira Flores, Emil Neubert, Patrick Gaffney, Raymond Deville, Arthur Calkins, Michael O’Carroll and others. At the beginning of chapter one I explain why these authors and not others were chosen. These texts have been cited in the introduction of chapter one, on the Historical Foundations of Devotion to Jesus through Mary. I have relied on their translations entirely. They were gathered from their books, articles and texts from classes offered at the International Marian Research Institute, in Dayton, Ohio. In chapter two I have used the English edition of *True Devotion*, as found in *God Alone, the Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Montfort Publications, since, according to the Montfortian Fathers, this is a reliable translation of Montfort’s writings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Montfort, St. Louis, *True Devotion to Mary*, in *God Alone, the Collected writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Montfort Publ. Bayshore, NY, 1997

In chapter three I used the English version of the Vatican translation of the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, published by the Daughters of St. Paul.

## Structure

In the first chapter we will demonstrate the way in which the whole tradition of giving oneself to Jesus through Mary has come down through the centuries in many different forms and expressions such as “slavery” “servant” or “consecration” to Mary. Expressions such as these have given a very real sense of belonging to Mary, of being hers, of placing oneself into her hands in order to belong more fully to Christ. St. Louis de Montfort says, “The devotion which I teach is not new. Its history goes back so far that the time of its origin cannot be ascertained with any precision.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, according to Fr. Laurentin, “total abandonment to Mary, to whom God had confided himself just as he had confided us to her goes all the way back to the seventh century to Isidore of Seville (560-636).”<sup>6</sup> As we will see, the history of this devotion also includes instances in which ambiguities and abuses have developed as a consequence of the way in which it was expressed and practiced.

In the second chapter we will see how St. Louis de Montfort developed the devotion to Jesus through Mary in a unique way. This will be done by way of a detailed presentation and analysis of his work *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.<sup>7</sup> There we will demonstrate how he corrected much of the confusion in regard to the language of consecration to Mary and many of the abuses in its practice.

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<sup>5</sup> St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, 159, in *God Alone, the Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Montfort Publications, Bayshore, NY 1997 (hereafter cited as TD).

<sup>6</sup> Laurentin, Fr. René, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1992, 198.

<sup>7</sup> St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, in *God Alone, the Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Montfort Publications, Bayshore, NY 1997.

In Chapter three and in Pope John Paul II we find the greatest contemporary proponent of the devotion "to Jesus through Mary." There we will show how John Paul was influenced by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning Mary, his own philosophy of the human person, and in particular the writings of Montfort in order to make a significant contribution to the development of the spirituality to Jesus through Mary.

In Chapter four we will compare the way in which Montfort understands devotion to Mary as compared to that of John Paul II. Expectedly, there are a number of ways in which their presentation of "to Jesus through Mary" is similar. We will highlight a few of the more significant points of convergence. Then we will look at the way in which John Paul II retranslates 'Holy Slavery' in a way that is sure to be more palatable for contemporary readers without losing any of depth and inspiration of *True Devotion*. Part II addresses the issues that stand at the very heart of the Catholic and non-Catholic reticence to devotion to Mary and then lay a theological foundation for this devotion. This will be done in hopes of opening the door for all people to experience Mary's God given role in the economy of salvation as our Mother in the order of grace.

The scope of this work, then, is to demonstrate the historicity of the devotion, focus on the unique contributions of Montfort to its refinement and clarification, and then show its development through the teachings of John Paul II. A contemporary examination of the devotion "to Jesus through Mary" is sure to raise key questions and concerns regarding the role of Mary in the work of Christ. These will be addressed in the final chapter of this study.

## **Part I. To Jesus through Mary: Historical Aspects**

### **Chapter One: The Historical Foundations of Devotion to Jesus through Mary**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this Chapter is not to give an exhaustive study of the history of devotion to Mary. Rather, we will look at a series of writers that paved the way for the devotion “to Jesus through Mary” as taught by St. Louis de Montfort. Many of the writers chosen for the historical analysis are mentioned by Montfort.<sup>8</sup> Desiring to strengthen his readers in the conviction that this devotion to our Lady was an effective and reliable devotion to lead us to Christ, Montfort documents a number of trustworthy sources from the spiritual tradition of the Church who highly recommend it “as a sure way to go to Jesus and to acquire holiness through union with him.”<sup>9</sup> On almost every page of his treatise he gives a number of saints and spiritual guides who have lived and promoted Mary as the perfect means to union with Christ. We could not include every spiritual writer and saint in the history of the Church who has in some way lived or written about devotion to Mary. For practical purposes we have chosen only those that are most representative of the development of devotion to Mary from “Holy Slavery” in the patristic period to what eventually developed in Montfort into “to Jesus through Mary.” This selection was based upon a number of authoritative studies on the history of the devotion “Holy Slavery” or “Consecration to Mary” by Théodore Koehler, René Laurentin, Emil Neubert, Patrick Gaffney, Raymond Deville, Arthur Calkins, Michael

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. TD 152, 159-168

<sup>9</sup> TD 159

O'Carroll and others.<sup>10</sup> If an author was named by Montfort as a witness to the devotion he taught, I have made note of this when I deal with that specific author.

## I. The Patristic Period

### St. Ildephonse of Toledo (606-667)

St. Ildephonse, Benedictine Abbot who became Archbishop of Toledo, is one of the most ancient witnesses to the devotion to Mary known as "Holy Slavery."<sup>11</sup> We have from him a prayer to Mary begging "that we may ever live as your slaves."<sup>12</sup> In another place he writes, "In order to be a devoted slave of the Son, I faithfully seek the service of the Mother."<sup>13</sup> Ildephonse gives himself to Mary as her slave in order to give himself more perfectly to Christ. It is important to emphasize that Ildephonse gives himself as a slave to Jesus by giving himself to the service of Mary. He gives himself to Jesus by means of service to Mary making Christ clearly the end or goal of his gift of self in love.

This absolute centrality of Christ is seen clearly in this longer text:

I deliver myself up to him as to the Lord of powers; to you, as to the servant of the Lord of all: to him, as to God, to you as the Mother of God; to him, as my Redeemer, to you as to the work of my redemption. For the work that he did for my redemption was originally formed in the truth of your person. He who became my Redeemer was your Son...It is for this reason that I am your slave, because your Son is my Lord(*Dominus*). You are my Lady (*Domina*) because you are the servant of my Lord. Thus I am the slave of the servant of my Lord, because you have become my Lady, as

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Arthur Calkins, *Totus Tuus, John Paul II's Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment*, Academy of the Immaculate, Libertyville, IL, 1992; R. Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*, p. 198-200; P. Gaffney, *Consecration*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, N.Y., 1994, p. 199-234; T. Koehler, *Slavery of Love*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, p. 1157-1168; Laurentin, Fr. René, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1992, p. 108-117; E. Neubert, *Life of Union with Mary*, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, WI, 1959, p. 15-16; M. O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p.107-109; M. Quemeneur, *Towards a History of Marian Consecration*, in *Marian Library Studies*, 122, March 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Théodore Koehler, S.M., *Servitude*, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, vol. 14, 1990, 730-745; T. Koehler, *Slavery of Love*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, 1997 p. 1158.

<sup>12</sup> *Oracional Visigótico (Visigoth Prayer Book)*, Barcelona 1946, 75, as found in T. Koehler, *Slavery of Love*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, N.Y., 1994, p. 1158.

<sup>13</sup> *De Virginitate Perpetua SS. Mariae* 12, PL 96, 105-110, translated in R. Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1992, p.109.

the Mother of your own Master. This is why I became your slave, because you are the Mother of the One who made me.

O very noble title of liberty... if only I could desire to be the slave of the Mother of my Master; if only I could merit to be the slave of the servant of the One who made me...O that I might be devotedly tied to your service...that I might love in your Mother what you accomplished in me with your love; that I might serve your Mother in order that you might test whether I have served you too thereby; that she might dominate me so that I might know that I have pleased you. And that her domination might be operative over me in this world so that you might be my Lord for all eternity.<sup>14</sup>

Ildephonse desires to give himself as a slave to Mary, his Lady or Queen so that he may serve his Lord all the more perfectly. For Ildephonse the most effective means to make Christ the Lord of his life is to make himself a slave of Mary. He goes to Jesus through Mary.

### **Germanus of Constantinople (+733)**

Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, was born in Constantinople in approximately 635. He was exiled to Plantonion during the iconoclastic crisis because of his staunch defense of the veneration of icons, and there he died in 733. He is an important historical witness to the doctrines later defined in the Church as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, as well as to the Church's constant belief in the intercession of Mary for her children who still journey upon earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties.<sup>15</sup>

In a homily on the Feast of Mary's Cincture, Germanus presents himself as a slave (doulos)<sup>16</sup> of Mary and urges his hearers to become slaves of Mary in imitation of Jesus

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. PL 96, 105B-107A, translated in R. Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1992, p.109-110.

<sup>15</sup> Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1999, p. 381.

<sup>16</sup> Fr. Theodore Koehler, in his article *Slavery of Love*, p. 1157-1158, has an excellent explanation concerning the word "slave." He says, "The word "slave" (in Latin *sclavus, slavus*) was first used in the

who emptied himself taking the form of a slave.<sup>17</sup> He bases his gift of self to Mary on his deep conviction concerning Mary's role of helping the believer into a deeper union with her Son. In Homily III on the Dormition he refers to Mary as "the ladder able to lift man up to heaven" and "the cane of those who let themselves be guided by the hand."<sup>18</sup> He emphasizes Mary's presence among us and her maternal role: "Though you also faced death, which is inevitable for human nature, your eye, which takes care of us, neither hesitates nor falls asleep."<sup>19</sup> He also exhorts the faithful to turn to Mary reminding them of her abiding presence and maternal care:

Even though you departed, you were not separated from the Christian people. Being the way towards such a great incorruptibility, you did not leave this corruptible world; on the contrary, you remain close to those who implore you. Those who faithfully seek you will not miss finding you.<sup>20</sup>

Germanus refers to her as, "*the way towards such a great incorruptibility.*" Christ, the one mediator between God and man, is "the Way", but here Germanus is speaking about Mary's maternal role for Christians as they journey toward union with Him. Germanus can call her "the way" following the traditional iconography of East and West in which Mary is understood to be "wholly transparent to Christ: that she 'shows the way'

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tenth century. The German lords and Spanish caliphs used to recruit their slaves from the Slav countries; in the thirteenth century, the Italian merchants renewed this practice. As a result, the word came to refer to any human being owned by another... As the Consecration is an act of Christian devotion, it is not so much its relation to actual slavery that matters but, rather, its foundation in Scripture and Tradition. In Scripture the Greek word *doulos*, translated by *servus* in the Vulgate version, referred to slavery as it was known in ancient times and to spiritual realities: our complete dependence on God and, in accordance with St. Paul's teaching, our acknowledgment of Christ's sovereignty. Thus, when St. Luke says that Mary was the *doule*, the slave or servant of the Lord, the meaning is to be understood in the spiritual sense. St. Paul urges us to imitate Christ, who took the form of a slave, being born in human likeness."

<sup>17</sup> Homily on the Cinchure of Mary, PG 98, 381 B, Fr. L. Gambero translated this text in his class notes for a course entitled, *The Mother of God in the Byzantine Christian Literature*, given at the Marian Library in the summer of 1998. (hereafter cited by the title of the course.)

<sup>18</sup> Homily III on the Dormition, PG 98,361 D, in Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1999, p. 385.

<sup>19</sup> Homily II on the Dormition, PG 98, 357 B, Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>20</sup> Homily I on the Dormition, PG 98, 345 BC, Ibid. p. 386.

*hodigitria*, to Christ and is herself ‘the Sign’ of the way.”<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, for Germanus it is *through* Mary that we grow into a greater union with Christ.

### **St. John of Damascus (+ 750)**

John was born in Damascus around 650 and died about 750. He is especially important to this study of the devotion “to Jesus through Mary” because he provides a synthesis of the thought of all the Fathers who preceded him. As one eminent patristic scholar noted, “His Marian doctrine may be considered a complete and substantial synthesis of patristic faith and teaching about the mystery of the Mother of God.”<sup>22</sup> He is also the first of the Fathers to speak of consecration to Mary.<sup>23</sup> St. Louis de Montfort cites him as an important witness to his devotion “to Jesus through Mary.”<sup>24</sup> In a homily on the Nativity of Mary he calls himself a “slave” of Mary stating:

O daughter of Joachim and Anna, O Lady, receive the word of a sinful servant (*slave*), who nevertheless burns with love and places in you his only hope of joy; in you he finds the guardian of his life, not only a Mediatrix in your Son’s presence, but also a sure pledge of salvation.”<sup>25</sup>

In a Homily on the Dormition (Assumption) John applies the image of Jacob’s Ladder to Mary. In this way he bears witness to Mary’s role of maternal mediation, of her cooperation with God to foster an immediate and more intimate union between Jesus and the faithful:

That man (Jacob) contemplated heaven joined to earth by the two ends of a ladder and saw angels going up and down upon it and saw himself symbolically wrestling with the Strong One, the Invincible. So you (Mary) have assumed the role of a mediatrix, having become the ladder by which God comes down to us,

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<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 1994, 2675 (hereafter cited as CCC.)

<sup>22</sup> Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, p. 400.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 401.

<sup>24</sup> TD 121

<sup>25</sup> Homily on the Nativity 12; PG 96, 680 B, in Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, p. 407.



assuming the weakness of our nature, embracing it and uniting himself to it, and thus enabling man to see God. O Mary you have brought together what was separated. Hence, angels descended to him, ministering to him as their God and Lord, and men, adopting the life of angels are carried up to heaven.<sup>26</sup>

According to John, Mary has been given the role of a mediatrix. God made her the “ladder” by which the Son descends to unite himself to man. Mary is also the “ladder” by which man ascends to union with God. John believes she has this role because it was through Mary and in Mary that God united himself to man in the Incarnation.<sup>27</sup> But now that Mary has given birth to Jesus, why does John believe she still plays an active role in our coming to union with God? Even after Mary gives birth to Christ she remains united to Him and to His redemptive mission. Mary’s profound union with Jesus in the Incarnation continues and is even stronger now that she is in heaven where she still bears Christ to the believer. Just as Mary played an active role in the Incarnation, formation and education of Jesus, she plays an active role from heaven by helping the believer to be conformed and united to Christ.

If we firmly abstain, then, from past sins and love the virtues with all our heart, taking them as our companions in life, the Virgin will frequently visit her servants, bringing all manner of blessings. She will be accompanied by Christ her Son, the King and Lord of all, who will dwell in our hearts.<sup>28</sup>

According to St. John Damascene, God planted the Spring of Eternal Life in Mary when the Son God became Man in her womb. She is the fountain through which the Divine Life of Christ was given to mankind and she is the fountain from which the life of Jesus will always flow to humanity. Mary’s union with Christ and her role in His work does not end with the birth of Jesus. There is an abiding union between Jesus and Mary

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<sup>26</sup> Homily I on the Dormition 8, PG 96, 713 A, Ibid. p. 405.

<sup>27</sup> Homily II on the Dormition 16, PG 96, 744 CD, Ibid. p. 405.

<sup>28</sup> Homily II on the Dormition 19, PG 96, 752 D, Ibid. p. 406.

and the more one seeks union with the Well (Mary), the more one drinks of the Spring of Eternal Life (Jesus). It is for this reason that John gives himself to Jesus through Mary.

We too, today, present ourselves to you, O Queen; and again, I say, O Queen, O Virgin Mother of God, We join our own souls to you; our hope in you is like an anchor that is firm and indestructible. Lifting our mind, soul and body, and all of ourselves to you, rejoicing in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, we reach through you One who is beyond our reach on account of his majesty.<sup>29</sup>

There are a number of points here that are important: The Greek word John uses for “lifting” to express the gift of himself to Mary is “*anatithemi*” which means: to “offer” something, to “dedicate”, to “deliver” or to “consecrate” to someone above or beyond who transcends the believer.<sup>30</sup> In this homily St. John is offering himself to Mary in order to be a perfect gift to the Son. It must be emphasized John’s gift of self does not end with Mary. By using the word “*anatithemi*” John is expressing a gift of himself that is to reach God: “we reach through you One who is beyond our reach on account of his majesty.” Fr. Laurentin highlights this important distinction:

Here St. John Damascene clearly respected the transcendence of God, who alone can consecrate; this nuance is obscured, though, whenever the translation “to consecrate oneself” is employed. Rather, *anatithemi* signifies more exactly a total but confident abandonment, a thrust upward (the prefix *ana*) to meet God.<sup>31</sup>

He states explicitly that he does not dedicate himself to Mary as the end or final goal of his giving. His consecration to her is the means to a deeper union with Christ. This gift of self to Mary is based on Mary’s unique relationship to her Divine Son by virtue of the divine maternity.<sup>32</sup> Jesus began to live in Mary in the Incarnation. This union between the

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<sup>29</sup> Homily I on the Dormition 14, PG 96, 720 CD, Ibid. p. 408.

<sup>30</sup> Laurentin, Fr. Rene, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1992, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Arthur Calkins, *Totus Tuus, John Paul II's Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment*, Academy of the Immaculate, Libertyville, IL, 1992, p. 48.

mother and the Son continued throughout their lives and became even more intimate once both were taken up to heaven. In this way Jesus always lives in Mary. John says,

Watch over us, O Queen, the dwelling-place of our Lord. Lead and govern all our ways, as you will. Restrain the impulses of our shameful passions. Lead us into the calm harbor of the divine will. Make us worthy of future happiness through the sweet face-to-face vision of the word made flesh through you.<sup>33</sup>

Because of this abiding union of Jesus and Mary she has the role of leading us to the calm harbor of His divine will. The more he entrusts himself to her the more he finds union with Christ. In light of this, it is no surprise that John carries on the ancient tradition of recognizing himself as a “slave” of Mary.

## **II. The Medieval Period**

### **St. Ambrose Autpert (+781)**

As we move into the medieval authors we begin with Ambrose Autpert, born in what is now France in the first part of the 700’s. As a young man he entered the Benedictine Monastery of St. Vincent at Volturno, Italy where he became abbot in 777. He died in 781. Ambrose makes two important points for our study: First, it is through Mary that our thanksgiving, petitions, tears of contrition and our very lives are presented to God. Second, Ambrose encourages the faithful to “entrust” themselves to the most blessed Virgin because of her role of bringing them into union with Jesus. Speaking to Mary Ambrose prays:

Therefore accept our thanksgiving, although modest and unequal to your merits. Receive our petitions, and, praying for us, have pity on our faults. Give hearing to our prayers inside the sacrarium of a favorable answer, and give back to us the grace of reconciliation. May what we present through you, be pardonable thanks to you; may we obtain what we earnestly ask for with great faith. Accept what we present, obtain what we ask for, excuse what we fear, because we have not found

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<sup>33</sup> Homily I on the Dormition 14, PG 96, 721 AB, translated by Fr. Gambero in his class notes for a course entitled, *The Mother of God in the Byzantine Christian Literature*.

anyone with greater merits to placate the wrath of the Judge than you, who merited to be the Mother of the Redeemer and Judge Himself.

Therefore, beloved brethren, with all devotion of our hearts, let us entrust ourselves to the intercession of the most blessed Virgin, and let us all implore her protection with all our strength, so that while we celebrate her with suppliant homage on earth, she may deign to recommend us in heaven with her diligent prayer. Nor is there any doubt that she, who merited to set forth the price for those to be freed, has more power than all the saints in offering prayers for those who are freed.<sup>34</sup>

In his sermon celebrating the feast of Mary's purification, which corresponds to the Feast of the Presentation, Ambrose explains that when Mary presents Christ in the temple, she offers him to the prophet Simeon who represents all people who await the promised Redeemer throughout all time. In giving Jesus to Simeon she gives Him to all that will accept Him. Ambrose goes on to explain that Mary never ceases to offer Jesus to us. Through her interventions she obtains that we be united to Christ. According to Ambrose we come to Jesus through Mary:

The Virgin offers the Lord to the prophet of prophets; she offers the Only One to an individual, or rather, she offers Him to all in the person of just one man, because she has given birth to the only Savior for the salvation of all. Indeed, she never ceases to offer the son she has generated, and *through her holy interventions, she obtains that the Redeemer be united to the elect*; and, to tell the truth, she carries on this duty with maternal affection...

That is why I beseech you, O my most blessed Virgin, to offer Christ to us with your affectionate consent, you who are not jealous of your children. Do not take into consideration the offenses of these your children, who know not how to honor you as your dignity deserves! For a loving mother tolerates the irreverence of her children, because she is conquered by the love she bears them. Help with your pious prayers those whom you have generated in your Only Son...<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Sermo Ambrosii Autperti Presbyteri et Monachi de Adsumptione Sanctae Mariae*, cura et studio R. Weber, Turnholti, Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici 1979 (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 27 B), p. 1034-1035, translated by Dr. Deyanira Flores in her text given in the course entitled, *Mary, Our Mother and Teacher*, given at the Marian Library in the Summer of 1998. (hereafter cited by the title of the course.)

<sup>35</sup> *Sermo Ambrosii-Autperti Presbyteri ad Monachos Monasterii Martyris Vincentii in Ipapanti Sanctae Mariae*, p. 991-992, translated by Dr. Deyanira Flores in her text given in the course entitled, *Mary, Our Mother and Teacher*.

Ambrose encourages the Christian, seeking a deeper relationship with Christ to entrust themselves to Mary, our Mother of Mercy because we are repentant sinners in need of her help and the mercy of Christ her Son.

### **St. Fulbert of Chartes (960-1028)**

Fulbert was bishop of Chartes from 1006 until his death in 1028. In a beautiful prayer Fulbert explains that Jesus entrusted all Christians to Mary when He entrusted John to her on Calvary. Her gave her to mankind as a gift to help us fulfill our baptismal gift of self to God. By virtue of our commitment into her care, we would always have recourse to the maternal love and assistance by which she leads us into union with her Son:

Remember, O Lady, that in Baptism I was consecrated to the Lord and professed the Christian name with my lips. Unfortunately I have not observed what I have promised. Nevertheless I have been handed over to you and committed to your care by the Lord, the living and true God. Watch over the one who has been handed over to you; keep safe the one who has been committed to your protection.<sup>36</sup>

He laments that though he has professed Christ with his lips he has failed in his weakness to live up to all he had promised. But he is able to take heart because the Lord, who knows our weakness, has given us to Mary so that she may help us. Her mission is to lead us to union with him so that our consecration begun in baptism may realize its full potential. In a sermon on the Purification of Mary, Fulbert expresses what Montfort will eventually teach in his devotion to Jesus through Mary:

And praying to the most pious Mother of God to deign to render acceptable to her Son us and our gifts, and if our offering appears to be clean bright and ardent, may she beseech Him to grant us purity of heart and body, the light of conscience, the

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<sup>36</sup> Henri. Barré, *Prères anciennes de l'Occident à la Mère du Sauveur: Des origines à saint Anselme*, Paris, 1963, p.159, as found in Arthur Calkins, *Totus Tuus, John Paul II's Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment*, Academy of the Immaculate, Libertyville, IL, 1992, p. 49.

fervor of faith and charity so that, inflamed by the gift of His grace and illumined by the Holy Spirit we may be worthy to appear with purified minds in the holy temple of his glory.<sup>37</sup>

Though Fulbert does not use the exact expression “to Jesus through Mary” he certainly is conveying the same truth. We give ourselves to Mary, praying she will render us and our gifts acceptable to her Son.

### **St. Odilo of Cluny (962-1049)**

Odilo should not to be confused with Odo of Cluny, the second abbot of Cluny, who died in 942. Though the practice was not new, Odilo greatly enriched the Cluniac Marian tradition by his special act of consecration. Montfort cites Odilo of Cluny as a witness to the devotion "to Jesus through Mary" saying that he was one of the first to practice it publicly in France. In his writing Odilo states:

O most Clement Virgin, Mother of the everlasting Savior, from this day forward take me into your service and be my advocate in all the affairs of my life. After God nothing is more precious to me than you and I most willingly deliver myself forever to your bondage as your slave.<sup>38</sup>

He gives himself to Mary as her slave begging her to be his advocate that he may serve her and gain from her help in all of his affairs.

### **St. Peter Damian (+1072)**

St. Peter grew up in a poor family in Ravenna and later became a hermit, the life from which he was called to become bishop and Cardinal. He was very important to Church reform in the eleventh century. He dedicated three sermons to the feast of the

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<sup>37</sup> *Sermon on the Purification*, PL v141 p. 320 A., translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Dr. Deyanira Flores entitled "Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation," given at the Marian Library in the summer of 1999. (hereafter cited as the title of the course.)

<sup>38</sup> H. Barré, *Prières anciennes de l'Occident à la Mère du Sauveur: Des origenes à saint Anselme*, p. 147, translation found in *Theotokos*, p. 271.

Nativity of Mary. In these he uses many metaphors to explain how Christ came to us through Mary in the Incarnation and how we now go back to Christ in the same way, through Mary. He emphasizes that Mary cooperated with God in a unique way to bear Christ to humanity and she continues to cooperate with God in a unique way to lead the faithful to union with her Son. In sermon forty-six we hear him say: “Just as through you (Mary) the Son of God deigned to come down to us, so also, through you may we reach communion with him”<sup>39</sup> St. Peter gives emphasis to another key point found in Montfort: Through baptism Christ gives us a share in his divine nature, which Mary cooperates to help us live out fully. St. Peter say, “He who through you participated in our nature, also through you may he make us participate in his divinity.”<sup>40</sup>

#### **St. Anselm of Lucca, (1036-1086)**

St. Anselm, as noted above, may have been the pioneer in the West of the spiritual interpretation of John 19:25-27.<sup>41</sup> Anselm wrote five prayers in which he explains why Mary has an active role in our Christian life.<sup>42</sup> First, God is Love and out of love for us he willed to have a Mother on earth. He willed to be cared for by her and that we too should enjoy her maternal care. That is why Jesus gave Mary as a Mother to us, in the person of the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the Cross. He gave his Mother to be our Mother so that Mary would care for us as she cared for Jesus. God wants us to freely

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<sup>39</sup> *Sermo XLVI Homilia in Nativitate B.V.M.*: Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, p. 274-290 translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Dr. Deyanira Flores entitled "Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation."

<sup>40</sup> *Lectio Tertia Ad Matutinum 61*, PL 145 935 936, translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Dr. Deyanira Flores entitled "Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation."

<sup>41</sup> *Theotokos*, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> The critical edition of these prayers was done by A. Wilmart, *Cinq textes de prière composés par Anselme de Lucques pour la Comtesse Mathilde*, in *Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique* 19 (1938) 23-72 (texts pp. 49-74). [They were found in two manuscripts: Arsenal (XIII century) four prayers: fol. 160 v-171

embrace this great gift of his Mother's maternal care by giving ourselves completely over to her just as He did in the Incarnation. In these thoughts, St. Anselm expresses beautifully what Montfort will later encourage his followers to do by giving themselves to Jesus Christ through Mary. St. Anselm even uses the same image as Montfort of placing oneself into the hands of Mary in order to enjoy the full effects of her maternal care:

Approach with confidence the throne of the one who is full of grace, the Mother of Our Lord. Just as she could not without indescribable pain look at her glorious Son nailed on the gibbet of the Cross, so she cannot tolerate our misery and the tribulations of our human anguish...Therefore, I take refuge O glorious Lady, in your goodness and indulgence and singular piety. *Into your very holy hands, I deliver my soul and my body.*<sup>43</sup>

Toward your mercy I rush to take refuge, O Lady, for never have you despised anyone who cried out to you. I implore your goodness in not entering into judgement of your servant...*You know that I have confided myself to you, with a total devotion. I have taken on the marks of slavery to you.* I hope I may die rather than go contrary to your will.<sup>44</sup>

### **Gottschalk of Limburg (+1098)**

Gottschalk was a Benedictine monk and poet born between 1010 and 1020. He wrote four sequences in honor of Mary, and two *Opuscula*, one is an explanation and defense of his sequence on the Assumption, the other, a sermon on the Blessed Virgin. Teaching that nothing comes to us from God without Mary's mediation, he says, "...O Mediatrix, Mother of the Mediator, in you man is united to God, and God to man...

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(among prayers of St. Anselm of Canterbury), and Estense (XIV century) two prayers: II, 46, fol. 93v-96v (following the story of Mathilde and her ancestors).]

<sup>43</sup> H. Barré, *Prières anciennes de l'Occident à la Mère du Sauveur: Des origenes à saint Anselme*, p. 229, as found in Laurentin, Fr. Rene, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1992, 113.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 23, as found in Laurentin, Fr. René, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1992, 113.



Therefore, Lady of us all, placate your Son, and help those who humbly entreat you, because through you alone He alone gives life to all those who are to be saved.”<sup>45</sup>

According to Gottschalk, Mary is the door “by which God came to us and we must go to him.”<sup>46</sup> He teaches in another place that life comes only from Christ, but through Mary. God the Father gives his Son to Mary, and Mary gives him to us.

By incarnating himself in you, He reduced His omnipotence to such an extent that He will not show to anyone His presence without you. For, just as God did not come to man without you, so man, without you, will never come to God. Neither patriarch, nor prophet, not he who is “more than a prophet” (Mt 11:9) reached God before you, since the Kingdom of heaven was still closed. They waited for the fruit of your womb, which is the hope of the saints, because through you the Awaited One by the faithful has opened up the bolts of heaven. Peter, who holds the keys, does not open to anybody, except to those who adore your Son. And at your command, He grants entrance to those who devotedly commit themselves to you...<sup>47</sup>

According to Gottschalk, everything goes to God through Mary.

The manifold fullness of that grace of which we have all received, was wholly poured on you and through you by many streams transmitted... all the saints by One alone through you alone were made holy... your merit surpasses the prayers of all the saints, indeed the prayer of all the saints is directed to God through you alone.<sup>48</sup>

### **St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)**

St. Anselm was a Benedictine theologian and philosopher, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093 where he dedicated himself arduously to the pastoral care of his flock. We have three moving prayers to Mary written by St. Anselm. In these

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<sup>45</sup> Blume C., Dreves G.M., *Analecta hymnica medii aevi*, Leipzig 1907, vol. 50, p. 339-369, Sequence 2: *De beata Maria Virgine “Fecunda verbo”* Vol. 50, p. 342, translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Dr. Deyanira Flores entitled “Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation.”

<sup>46</sup> *Theotokos*, p. 159.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Sequence *De Assumptione* p. 343-344, translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Dr. Deyanira Flores entitled “Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation.”

<sup>48</sup> Blume C., Dreves G.M., *Godescalcus Linpurgensis. Gottschalk, Monch von Limburg an der Hardt und Propst von Aachen, ein Prosator des XI. Jahrhunderts, in Hymnologische Beitrage*, Vol. 1, Leipzig 1897,

prayers he makes it very clear that he considers himself a slave of Mary. He prays: "Act, O Lady, grant, O Lady, heal the soul of this sinner your slave by the power of the blessed Fruit of your womb, who sits at the right hand of the all-powerful Father, great in glory forever and ever."<sup>49</sup> Though he does not employ the exact phrase "to Jesus through Mary" we certainly find the idea or concept in his prayers that Mary takes the repentant sinner to her Son to reconcile the sinner and the Son.

When I have sinned against the Son, I have alienated the mother, nor can I offend the mother without hurting the Son. What will you do, then, sinner? Where will you flee? Who can reconcile me to the Son if the mother is my enemy, or who will make my peace with the mother if I have angered the Son? Surely if I have offended you both equally you will both also be merciful? So the accused flees from the just God to the good mother of the merciful God. The accused finds refuge from the mother he has offended in the good Son of the kind mother. *The accused is carried from one to the other and throws himself between the good Son and the good mother.*<sup>50</sup>

Anselm gives himself as a slave of Mary, his Lady and Queen, because he is a repentant sinner. As his Mother of Mercy she will obtain the mercy he seeks from Christ her Son.

### **Geoffrey of Vendome (+1132)**

Geoffrey was abbot of the Benedictine monastery of the Trinity at Vendome and a Cardinal of the Church. In his sermon on the Purification of Mary writes:

We are indeed Christians too, but through our will and malice and great wickedness, having made ourselves unworthy of so great a fraternity, we have become unworthy of the inheritance of so great a Father. Whereupon let us hasten to His Mother, and through her to her Son Himself, who, with a pious and merciful dispensation, willed His Mother to be our Mother, so that she should grant us help in time of need. And since we know that our Redeemer is always

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p.9-219, Sermon *De beata Maria Virgine*, p. 165, translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Dr. Deyanira Flores entitled "Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation."

<sup>49</sup> *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, translated with an introduction by Sister Benedicta Ward, S.L.G., with a foreword by R.W. Southern, Penguin Books, England, 1973, p. 109.

<sup>50</sup> *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, p.110-114.

ready to forgive us, and that we have His glorious Mother, if we wish, to assist us, we should not lie down in our sins, but rise speedily.<sup>51</sup>

And,

And because with our merits we can do little, or certainly nothing, let us seek council elsewhere. The only thing we have left is to depend on the Redeemer's mercy, and on His Mother's help. Therefore, brothers, let us humbly confess ourselves miserable and unhappy. With fear as well as love let us pray to the good mother of the Lord, the pious Virgin Mary, so that she may not be indignant with us sinners, who have never honored her as she deserves, but rather have provoked her anger with many wrongs. May she remember not our offenses, but be conquered by that love with which she brought us forth, and may she cling near to us with a mother's piety, as if we were already condemned to punishment. May this most pious mother take up our cause, and work towards our interests, and help us, so that risen from the death of sins with her aid, we may be led, by the light of faith and wisdom, to the temple of heavenly glory, and be offered to her Son. May she place us at His feet, and with her prayers, make us remain in Jerusalem, that is, vision of peace...<sup>52</sup>

Characteristic of the medieval tradition Geoffrey entrusts himself as a repentant sinner to his Mother of Mercy, Mary. He entreats her as a son in need of forgiveness and love, trusting with great confidence that at her side he may come to union with Jesus.

### **St. Bernard (+1153)**

Bernard was born at Fontaines-les-Dijon, Burgundy in 1090. He entered the Benedictine monastery of Citeaux in 1112, which is the cradle of the Cistercian Order. In 1115 he founded a new monastery at Clairvaux where he was abbot for 38 years until he died in 1153. When he died there were over 700 monks in his monastery and there were 165 foundations connected to his order. This success is not surprising, for he placed everything under the special protection of the Mother of God.

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<sup>51</sup> *De Purificatione Sanctae Mariae*, PL 157, 266 A, translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Deyanira Flores entitled "Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation."

<sup>52</sup> *De Purificatione Sanctae Mariae*, PL 157, 266 B – C, translation found in the class notes for a course taught by Deyanira Flores entitled "Medieval Understanding of Mary's Mediation."

Bernard taught very clearly that we should offer everything to God through the hands of Mary because God gives everything to us through Mary. Let us look at a famous text from a sermon dedicated to the Nativity of Mary:

For the rest, most dearly beloved, let us strive with all diligence, that the Word Who came forth unto us from the mouth of the Father and through the Virgin's womb shall not return to Him void (Is 55:11), but through the same holy Virgin let us render Him back "grace for grace" (John 1:16). Let us "declare the memory of the abundance of His sweetness" (Ps 145:7) until it shall be given us to employ His presence, and let the rivers of grace return to their origin so that they may flow down upon us again in greater abundance (Eccles 1:7). For unless they revert to their fountain-head they shall be dried up; if we are found unfaithful in that which is little we shall not deserve to receive that which is greater (Mt 25:21).

But, my brother, whatsoever thou hast a mind to offer to the Lord be sure to entrust it to Mary, so that thy gift shall return to the Giver of all grace through the same channel by which thou didst obtain it. God of course had the power, if He so pleased, to communicate His grace without the interposition of this Aqueduct. But he wanted to provide us with a needful intermediary. For perhaps "thy hands are full of blood" (Is 1:15) or dirtied with bribes: perhaps thou hast not like the Prophet "shaken them free from all gifts" (Is 33:15). Consequently, unless thou wouldst have thy gift rejected, be careful to commit to Mary the little thou desirest to offer, that the Lord may receive it through her hands, so dear to him and most "worthy of all acceptance" (1 Tim 1:15). For, Mary's hands are the very whitest of lilies; and assuredly the Divine Lover of lilies will never complain of anything presented by His Mother's hands that is not found among the lilies. Amen.<sup>53</sup>

Bernard begins with a beautiful text from Isaiah 55:10-11: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return without watering the earth, making the earth bring forth fruit, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." He goes on to explain

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<sup>53</sup> *Sermon for the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, in *St. Bernard's Sermons on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, translated by a priest of Mount Mellaray, Maslands Ltd., Augustine Pub. Co., Devon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 1987, p. 101-103.

that the Father has given us everything in Christ and given us His Son through the hands of Mary. Now, we must make a return in love. As a return we must make a total gift of ourselves to Him. But, Bernard says, entrust this gift to Mary. Why? Because the only gift worthy is a total gift of self. In our sin and weakness we fail to give such a gift. How then are we to accomplish this? “Through the hands of Mary”, Bernard explains. We entrust ourselves to her because she gave herself completely to God as His handmaid. Therefore, she is able to help us give ourselves to God. Then Bernard makes an important distinction: God had the power if He so pleased to communicate his grace without the interposition of this aqueduct. God could do it without Mary, but He chose not to do so. In his infinite love God has chosen to give us the love of a Mother, His Mother.

### **Blessed Gueric of Igny (+1157)**

Bl. Gueric was born in Tournai about 1075. In 1120, after becoming familiar with the great reputation of Bernard of Clairvaux, he went to see the famed preacher. He was so moved by Bernard that he spent the next thirteen years with him as his devout disciple. St. Bernard made him abbot of Igny where he died in 1157. Thirteen of his fifty-four sermons are devoted to Marian feasts. It is in his sermon on the Assumption that Bl. Gueric expresses the idea of our coming to union with Jesus through Mary.

O Mother of Mercy, be filled with your Son's glory and leave what you have over to your little ones (Ps 16:4). You are now at the table, we are dogs under the table (Mt. 15:27). Like a maid with her eyes on the hands of her mistress (Ps. 122:2) this hungry family looks to you for the food of life. Through you we have shared in the fruit of life at the table of these present sacraments; through you may we share at the table of everlasting joys in the same fruit of life, Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb, to whom be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Sermon 50, *The Fourth Sermon for the Assumption*, in *The Liturgical Sermons of Gueric of Igny I and II*, Cistercian Fathers Series 8 and 32, Cistercian Publications, Shannon, Ireland, 1971, p. 191.

Just as Mary gave us the Bread of Life in the Incarnation; so now, it is through Mary that we will feed on Jesus at the table of the sacraments and at the table of everlasting joys.

### **St. Aelred of Rievaulx (1109 - 1167)**

Another of St. Bernard's more influential disciples, St. Aelred was Abbot of the Cistercian Monastery of Rievaulx in Yorkshire. He wrote 14 Marian sermons in which he speaks very strongly of our filial debt to Mary. As our spiritual mother, she is owed our total dedication. We are born and nurtured through her, and thus profoundly indebted to her.

We owe her honor because she is the mother of our Lord. For whoever does not honor the mother, without doubt dishonors the Son. Moreover Scripture says: "Honor your father and your mother." What shall we say then? Isn't she our mother? Indeed, she is truly our mother. For through her we are born, through her we are nourished, through her we grow. We are born through her, not into the world, but to God. We are nourished through her, not with human milk, but with that of which the Apostle speaks, "I have given you milk, not meat." (1 Cor 1:30) We grow through her, not in bodily nature, but in spiritual strength.

We owe her also slavery: for she is our Lady. For the spouse of our Lord is our Lady; the spouse of our King is our Queen: then let us serve her. For the Apostle directed: "Slaves be subject to your masters in all fear." (1 Pet 2:18) And if he acts against the precept of the Lord who does not serve those earthly masters, without doubt they are censurable who do not serve this spiritual Lady. But how ought we to serve her? No service pleases her so much as this: that we humble ourselves with all affectionate love before her Son: for all praise, all service that we render to her Son, all that she considers done for herself. Let no one say: "Even if I do this or that against the Lord, I don't care much: I will serve holy Mary and be secure." Nothing of the sort! As soon as a man offends the Son, then without question he offends also the mother. But when we wish to be reconciled to our Lord after our sins, then we have need to seek her out and commit our cause to her.<sup>55</sup>

Aelred describes his devotion to Mary in terms of slavery to his Lady, and his service to her as the greatest possible service to his Lord.

### **Odo of Canterbury (+1200)**

In Odo of Canterbury, a Benedictine abbot of Battle, we find an exact usage of the expression "to Jesus through Mary." It is not surprising to see this 500 years before St. Louis de

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<sup>55</sup> PL 195, 322-324 D, in Agius A., *St. Aelred and Our Blessed Lady*, in *Downside Review* 64, 1946, p. 35.

Montfort, as it is clear the devotion of giving oneself to Jesus through Mary is a most ancient Christian belief and practice. Odo expresses it well:

But the true wisdom is Christ who is and who is called “Power of God” and “Wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:24) He is truly and properly the wisdom of Christians, because it is not licit for Christians to search for wisdom more elevated than his. He who wants to receive this wisdom confides to Mary this desire of his and Mary will preoccupy herself with he who is to find Christ. In fact, one goes to Christ through Mary, one goes to the Son through the mother. By means of the Mother of Mercy one reaches Mercy itself.<sup>56</sup>

We have seen how the whole tradition of giving oneself to Jesus through Mary has a very ancient and well documented history as it has come down to us under the form of different expressions such as slavery, servant and consecration. As we have looked at the texts of the patristic and medieval authors presented above we see what appears to be two very different attitudes, though in reality, these may be just one developing concept, that of the spiritual maternity of Mary. The first attitude being that of the patristic authors who gave themselves to God by giving themselves to their Queen, Mary, to be her servant or slave. They gave themselves to her that by serving her they might love and serve their King, Christ, in a more perfect way. This was in imitation of the Son, who for the love of His Father and for the love of mankind, emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave and became obedient unto death.

For the patristic authors the most important way of looking at Mary was as the *Theotokos*. She is the Mother of the one who is the King. Consequently she is the Queen whom they sought to serve in order to love and serve the King. We see this clearly in Ildephonse of Toledo and in John Damascene. The concept of Mary’s spiritual maternity

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<sup>56</sup> *Testi Mariani del Secondo Millennio*, ed. Fr. Luigi Gambero, vol, 3, p. 490, translation from the Italian was supplied by Fr. Luigi Gambero.

begins implicitly in the patristic writers, but it is not until the medieval authors that it is more developed.

This patristic attitude is in contrast to another attitude that we begin to see in the texts of the medieval writers. This attitude can be easily misunderstood and too harshly criticized. Michael O'Carroll, the eminent encyclopediast on Mary, describes it as the "medieval contrast between Christ as the King of Justice and Mary as the Queen of Mercy – being set in contrast by her Son with his own severity."<sup>57</sup> In the texts of such medieval authors as Ambrose Autpert, Fulbert of Chartes, Peter Damian, Anselm of Lucca, Gottschalk of Limburg, and others, this concept is present in a certain sense but it must be understood properly. We must be careful not to make too hasty of a judgement. When one surveys the whole of their writings we see a number of points. Most importantly, the medieval authors developed in a much greater way than the Fathers the idea of the spiritual maternity of Mary. Anselm of Lucca was one of the pioneers in the West of the spiritual maternity of Mary. Commenting on John 19:25-27 he says,

Mary there is your son, apostle, there is your mother – so that the glorious mother should intercede with such great and merciful affection for all true believers and guard by her patronage the redeemed slaves adopted as her sons, removing all fear from the unfortunate ones, to whom he granted the great consolation and joy of glorying in the name of the Mother of the Lord and exulting in association with your Son, co-heirs with Jesus Christ.<sup>58</sup>

Since the spiritual maternity of Mary was developed more fully in their time it would have been natural for them to see Mary as the Mother of Him who is Mercy consequently she being the Mother of Mercy. We see this in the writings of Peter Damian. The

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<sup>57</sup> *Theotokos*, p. 34.

<sup>58</sup> O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 34.



medieval authors had developed another point more fully as well. With the spiritual maternity came also a more developed understanding of the economy of salvation. If God had established Mary as our spiritual Mother, and had entrusted Himself to her in the Incarnation. Then we ought to follow this economy, we ought to imitate Christ and abandon ourselves to her in her role in this economy.

Another point of importance is this; if we look at the medieval texts as a whole we quickly find that they did not always portray Christ as the severe Judge in contrast to Mary as the Merciful Mother. The majority of the time they speak of God's love for the repentant sinner. As often as they call Him the severe Judge they call Him Mercy. We see this portrayed in Odo of Canterbury. At times they do speak of Christ as the Judge. Yet so does Christ Himself in Scripture. If we have a proper eschatology we recognize that Christ will come to Judge the living and the dead. The medieval authors also had a clear recognition of the seriousness of sin, as does God who has such love for us that He wants us to understand the great seriousness of sin so that we will repent and flee from the only thing that can separate us from Him. We must remember that many of these medieval texts were directed to an audience whom they wanted to spur on to repentance and reform. When it comes to preaching we often speak in somewhat stronger terms to motivate the hearer. This is what Christ did in many of His teachings.

As we move to the Confraternities of Holy Slavery that began in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we will see that in certain instances the consecration, the gift of self, is addressed only to Mary and seemingly to fail to be ultimately directed to Christ. Likewise, at times it failed to lead the believer to a deeper imitation of Christ.

Why did this occur? We are not able to answer this from the texts. We may be tempted to draw the conclusion that it is a result of the portrayal of Christ as a severe Judge and Mary the Mother of Mercy to whom the sinner flies for help. But it may be too hasty and critical of a judgment to point to the medieval presentation of Mary as the cause for the reasons I mentioned above. The fact remains though, as we will see, in certain instances the devotion of Holy Slavery did fail to be Christocentric at times and thus needed to be more fully developed. This development will occur with Cardinal Bérulle and the French School and even more fully in St. Louis de Montfort.

### III. Confraternities of "Holy Slavery" in Spain

With St. Ildephonse of Toledo we have the most ancient witness to the devotion "Holy Slavery" in Spain. Fr. Koehler tells us that by "the sixteenth century the word 'slave' was part of the vocabulary of the spiritual masters of the 'golden age' of religious history in Spain."<sup>59</sup> In 1484, the Franciscan Sisters dedicated to the Conception of Mary in Alcala, Spain, gave themselves in an act of consecration first to Jesus and then to Mary as her slave. Fr. Koehler tells us, "The nuns of Alcala de Henares declared themselves slaves 'out of love for our Lord and the Immaculate Conception of Mary in order to serve them'; 'they offered themselves to our Redeemer and his glorious Mother and surrendered to them, body and soul, as living victims.' They were therefore not only spouses of Christ but also slaves of his most holy Mother."<sup>60</sup> It is also in Spain that the first Confraternity of Slaves of the Mother of God was established between 1575 and 1595, also in Alcala. It was canonically established on August 2, 1595, under the direction of Sister Agnes of St.

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<sup>59</sup> T. Koehler, *Slavery of Love*, in *Jesus King in Mary*, p. 1158.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1159.

Paul at the convent of St. Ursula. With the beginning of the Confraternities of Holy Slavery we mark a significant move from individuals consecrating themselves to Jesus through the slavery of Mary to entire communities doing so publicly.

In 1612 Anthony de Alvarado, a Benedictine monk, founded a separate confraternity in Valladolid, Spain called, The Slaves of the Exiled Holy Virgin. Between 1615 and 1617 Fr. Peter de la Serna, a member of the Order of Mercy, being familiar with the Slaves of the Exiled Holy Virgin published a work on Holy Slavery in Seville entitled *Statutes and Constitutions of the Slaves of Our Lady of Mercy*, which spread throughout the Mercedarians.<sup>61</sup>

The Confraternity of Holy Slavery in Alcala, was embraced personally by Philip III, King of Spain and his wife, Queen Margaret. The Confraternity subsequently became known to her confessor, St. Simon de Rojas. After the death of the Queen in 1611, King Philip helped de Rojas found the Confraternity of the Slaves of the Ave Maria in Madrid. This confraternity spread quickly throughout the monasteries of the Trinitarians and was approved in Rome in 1616.<sup>62</sup> Not long after this, de Rojas asked Bartholomew de los Rios to bring the Confraternity to Belgium, which he was able to do as the preacher for Isabella, wife of Archduke Albert, the Governor of the Low Countries. From the work of Bartholomew de los Rios and the Augustinians, the devotion spread quickly to Germany, Luxembourg, and France.<sup>63</sup> Prince Wladislaus IV, after hearing de los Rios preach on

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. TD 160; Gaffney, *The Holy Slavery of Love*, 147.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. TD 160

Holy Slavery in Belgium, brought the Confraternity to Poland. During this time the Theatines brought the Confraternity to Italy.<sup>64</sup>

Throughout the seventeenth century Holy Slavery to Mary spread throughout Europe. During this time the practice of giving oneself to Mary as a slave was highly criticized on the basis that it appeared to give her the worship and adoration due to God alone. In some instances abuses and tendentious interpretations of the devotion arose which gave the impression that it was not Christocentric in nature. In practice it sometimes remained at an external level only, as in the wearing of chains. In these instances devotion to Mary fell short of the true goal, the interior transformation of the believer to the image of Christ.<sup>65</sup> It was because of these failings and abuses that Pope Clement X placed the practice on the Index in 1673 and proscribed the wearing of chains in 1675. The Church was most clearly not proscribing the devotion of Holy Slavery, but the abuses of the devotion. As Fr. Laurentin notes, the whole movement had a problem that had to be addressed.

St. Paul could speak of being a “slave” of Christ, for Christ was God, by whom everything had been created. We all “belong” to our Creator, more thoroughly and more radically than a slave belongs to his master, for God is the author of our very existence and keeps it in being at its every moment. He alone is the necessary Being, and everything else exists only through him. It is therefore normal that we should recognize our total belonging to God; this is all the more true because he has granted us a free existence in a totally gratuitous (though gracious) fashion, providing us with our own autonomy. However, *we cannot really be the slaves of another creature*. This would constitute not only an undue alienation, contrary to human rights; it would even be a form of idolatry, that is to say, of blasphemy. Now the Holy Virgin is a creature.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> TD 161

<sup>65</sup> P. Gaffney, *Consecration*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, 206.

<sup>66</sup> Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, p. 53.

#### IV. Cardinal Bérulle and the French School

Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) became familiar with the spirituality of Holy Slavery while in Spain, and on his return in 1604 he wrote the work *Offering to the Holy Virgin in a State of Dependence and Servitude*. This work drew a great deal of criticism on the basis that to give oneself to Mary as a slave appears to be idolatry. Bérulle defended his position, stating that the gift of self to Mary as her slave was in imitation of Christ's self-donation to Mary in the Incarnation. This gift of self to Mary does not end with her, but is intended to lead to a deeper union with Christ.

Cardinal Bérulle is significant to our study because it was through these criticisms and his response with precise theological distinctions that Holy Slavery was finally stated in a clearly Christocentric manner. Montfort highlights Bérulle's development of Holy Slavery when he says: "He showed them that the devotion was founded on the example of Jesus Christ, on the obligations which we have toward Him and on the vows which we have made in holy Baptism ...making them see that this consecration to the holy Virgin and to Jesus Christ by her hands, is nothing else than a perfect renewal of the vows and promises of Baptism."<sup>67</sup>

As outlined above, Holy Slavery in some instances failed to be centered on Christ. The consecration was directed to Mary rather than to Jesus. Often it failed to go deeper than the exterior practices to reach the goal of an interior transformation of the soul of the believer according to the interior attitudes and dispositions of Christ. Many of these ambiguities were corrected by Cardinal Bérulle. In his consecration he gave himself first to Jesus and then to Mary in imitation of Jesus, who made a continual offering of himself

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<sup>67</sup> TD 162

to the Father, through Mary in the Incarnation.<sup>68</sup> In *The Life of Jesus* Bérulle formulated his consecration to Jesus:

I offer, submit, vow, and dedicate myself to Jesus Christ Our Lord, in the state of perpetual servitude to him, to his deified humanity and his humanized divinity, and I do this with as firm, constant, and irrevocable resolve as is possible with the help of grace, and which are rightly merited by the perpetuity and perdurance of this mystery.<sup>69</sup>

Followed by a total gift of self to Mary:

I vow and dedicate myself to Jesus Christ in his state of perpetual servitude, to his holy Mother, the Virgin Mary...I give myself to her as a slave in honor of the donation which the Eternal Word made of himself as Son through the mystery of the Incarnation which he wished to accomplish in and through her.”<sup>70</sup>

In Bérulle Holy Slavery did not remain at the level of the exterior. He strove to lead people to imitate all the states, interior attitudes and dispositions of Christ, in order to become completely conformed to Him. In this regard Bérulle made a crucial Christocentric correction in his consecration by giving himself first to Jesus Christ. After his gift of self to Christ he went on to give himself to Mary as her slave in honor of the self-donation Christ made to Mary in order to dwell within and depend upon her entirely. For Bérulle, to entrust oneself to Mary is to imitate the self-emptying of Christ in the Incarnation, in which as Paul says, he took the form of a slave in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have demonstrated that the devotion which Montfort teaches, “to Jesus through Mary” is not new. As we will see, Montfort brings this

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<sup>68</sup> Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, p. 50.

<sup>69</sup> M. Rigal, *Les Mysteres de Marie*, in Coll. Les Lettres Chrétiennes, Paris 1961, 204, translated in O’Carroll, *Theotokos*, p. 80.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 223.

devotion to a high point, yet the whole idea of giving oneself to Jesus through Mary is a very ancient devotion going back as far as the seventh century with St. Isidore of Seville. We have seen how it has come down through the centuries in the form of many different expressions such as slavery, servitude and as consecration to Mary. All of these phrases indicate the desire to belong totally to Mary as the means to belong more fully to Jesus. They give a very real sense of placing oneself into the hands of Mary that she may lead us to a more perfect union with Christ. At first it may appear that many of the medieval authors express a second attitude, one of giving themselves to Mary, the Merciful Mother to avoid condemnation from Christ the Just Judge. Without repeating many points we addressed concerning this issue earlier, let it suffice to say this. Though the medieval authors may lean this way as a result of their developing theology of Mary's spiritual maternity, it does not prevent them from expressing the more patristic attitude of giving themselves to Mary to be a more faithful servant of Christ.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially through the influence of the Spanish Confraternities of Holy Slavery we saw how in some instances devotion to Mary forgot its Christocentric nature and abuses developed. In other cases devotion to Mary remained on the level of the external and failed to emphasize that the soul of the believer must be conformed to Christ. With Cardinal Bérulle and the French School "Holy Slavery" regained much of its Christ-centeredness and a proper emphasis was placed on the interior transformation of the believer in the likeness of Christ. Though Bérulle gave himself to Christ first and then to Mary, he still gave himself to Mary to be her slave. Therefore the age-old question remained. Was it permissible to give oneself to Mary to be

her slave, or is this idolatry? The problem was to be resolved in the teaching of St. Louis de Montfort.

## **Chapter Two: St. Louis de Montfort**

### **Introduction**

St. Louis de Montfort (1673-1716) drew from the patristic and medieval tradition of giving oneself as a servant to Mary and from the Christocentric corrections to Holy Slavery made by Cardinal Bérulle and the French School to develop his own distinctive devotion known as “to Jesus through Mary.” Raymond Deville, an expert on the French School of Spirituality says, “Among all the spiritual leaders of his era and perhaps, one might say, of all time, Grignon de Montfort is probably the one who developed the deepest theology of devotion to Mary in the Christian life for simple, humble people.”<sup>71</sup>

Montfort may have been introduced to “Holy Slavery” by the Jesuits, while studying with them at Rennes, but we know for a fact that he immersed himself in the literature on this devotion while he worked as a librarian when he was a student at St. Sulpice in Paris.<sup>72</sup> It is here that Montfort became familiar with the patristic and medieval authors on “Holy Slavery” who had a great influence on the development of his own devotion to Mary. He cites many of these authors in articles 152 –182 of *True Devotion*.

Montfort’s more proximate sources appear to be, as mentioned above, Cardinal de Bérulle, the founder of the French School of Spirituality, and his disciples J.J. Olier and H. Boudan. He finds the theological foundation for his Marian devotion especially in J.B

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<sup>71</sup> R. Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*, p. 199.

<sup>72</sup> *God Alone, The Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, p. X.



Crasset and F. Poire, yet Bérulle and Boudan play the most significant role in the unique contributions Montfort will make to “Holy Slavery.”<sup>73</sup>

There are three works of St. Louis de Montfort that deal with the devotion to Jesus through Mary, *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, *Secret of Mary and True Devotion*.<sup>74</sup> *Love of Eternal Wisdom* is Montfort’s principal book by virtue of the fact that it presents a synopsis of his spirituality. It is centered on Jesus Christ, Incarnate Wisdom, and his devotion to the Cross, but it also provides the true setting for his devotion to Mary as the fourth means to acquire divine Wisdom. *Secret of Mary* touches on devotion to Mary, though its specific purpose is to give a concise teaching on Montfort’s version of Holy Slavery. If the entire purpose of this study was to present the Mariology of St. Louis de Montfort it would be necessary to begin with his work *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, for it is here that Montfort gives his Mariology a proper foundation in the Trinity and the Incarnation. But, because this is a study of the devotion, to Jesus through Mary, it entails a presentation not only of Montfort but of a number of the patristic and medieval authors that prepared the way for it, and of the contemporary presentation of this devotion in John Paul II, consequently, it is not possible to present Montfort’s principal work in detail. Therefore, I have decided to focus my attention on his treatise on *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*. In the first part of *True Devotion* Montfort gives the theological foundations for Mary’s role in the Christian life. In the second part he explains the perfect consecration to Jesus through the hands of Mary. Montfort’s aim in this treatise was to show the role of Mary in God’s plan of salvation, in one’s own life as a baptized

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<sup>73</sup> p. Gaffney, *Consecration*, p. 206.

<sup>74</sup> Found in *God Alone, the Collected Writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Montfort Publications, Bayshore, NY 1997.

Christian and in one's apostolic life. In *True Devotion* we learn the new shape Montfort gave to the devotion to Jesus through Mary and how he clothed it with helpful practices, both interior and exterior.<sup>75</sup>

## **I. The Structure of *True Devotion***

Montfort developed his devotion to Mary most fully in his best-known work, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.<sup>76</sup> In order to give a clear presentation of his thought concerning the spirituality of "to Jesus through Mary" I have divided his treatise on devotion to Mary into two major parts. In articles 1-119, Montfort presents Mary's role in the divine economy, that is, Mary's role in the life and redemptive mission of Jesus Christ and in the life of the baptized. In articles 120-273, Montfort presents the "Perfect Practice" of true devotion to Mary in which he explains how to prepare and live total consecration to Jesus through the hands of Mary. In order to explain the theological foundations of this devotion I will first summarize Montfort's systematic reasoning, and then treat each key element in greater depth. The main points of the "Perfect Practice" will be discussed in the following section. The practice of the devotion is both illumined by and illuminative of the theology of Montfort, thus completing the picture of his contribution to its development.

At this point in time we must look at the way in which St. Louis de Montfort presents God's plan of salvation since the divine economy is the framework around which he will build his spiritual house that is known as "to Jesus through Mary." Once we see this framework we will more easily understand Montfort's devotion.

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<sup>75</sup> *God Alone*, p. 291.

<sup>76</sup> Montfort, St. Louis, *True Devotion to Mary*, in *God Alone, the Collected writings of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, Montfort Publ. Bayshore, NY, 1997.

We may summarize the economy of salvation according to Montfort in the following way. In the Incarnation, Jesus entrusted himself totally to Mary to be her Son and to depend entirely upon her as any child depends upon its mother. As His Mother, Mary cooperated with God to give human life to Jesus. Yet, her divine maternity did not end simply with His birth. Motherhood includes not only the giving of life but also the duty to educate and form the new life. Mary did this for Jesus by cooperating with the Holy Spirit to educate and form Him as He grew to maturity. Then, at Calvary, just as Mary cooperated with God to give life to Jesus in the Incarnation, she cooperated with Him at the Cross, to restore the life of grace to mankind dead in sin. Through this cooperation to give us life she became our mother in the order of grace. The life of grace, which is the fruit of the redemptive love of Jesus and the maternal love of Mary, comes to mankind through faith and baptism. Once we receive the life of Christ, our vocation is to be conformed and united to Him. The main problem lies in our weakness and failure to respond or cooperate with God in the reception of the life of Jesus in our souls because of self-love and self-will, thus we fail to grow in the likeness of Christ. Consequently our baptismal consecration remains unfulfilled. For this reason Jesus gives Mary to the baptized to be our mother, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, she may educate and form us in the image of her Son. To accomplish this maternal mission, Mary intercedes as a mother to dispose and inspire the faithful to know and to do God's will that we may be conformed fully to Christ, which is the completion of the baptismal consecration. According to St. Louis de Montfort, this is why devotion to Mary is the most effective means of consecration to Jesus Christ. It is for this reason, that we ought to entrust ourselves to Mary in imitation of Christ. This is God's plan of salvation as Montfort sees

it. He builds his devotion to Jesus through Mary around the framework of the divine economy. Now that we have outlined the main points around which Montfort will build, let us take a more detailed look at each part of the structure.

**A. The Incarnation and the Cross - heart of the divine economy**

According to St. Louis de Montfort the mystery that shows us the way in which God wills to save mankind is the mystery of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is the way in which God united Himself to humanity in His first coming and it is the prototype of the way in which God will unite Himself with each person until Christ returns in glory.

The plan adopted by the three persons of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation, the first coming of Christ, is adhered to each day in an invisible manner throughout the Church and they will pursue it to the end of time until the last coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>77</sup>

The Father gave His Son to the world through the maternity, through the hands so to speak, of Mary. According to this model He will give the life of Jesus to every person until the end of time, that is, through the maternal cooperation of Mary.<sup>78</sup> Montfort says,

Let me remind you again of the dependence shown by the three divine Persons on our Blessed Lady. Theirs is the example which fully justifies our dependence on her. The Father gave and still gives his Son only through her. He raises children for himself only through her. He dispenses his graces to us only through her. God the Son was prepared for mankind in general by her alone. Mary in union with the Holy Spirit, still conceives him and brings him forth daily. It is through her alone that the Son distributes his merits and virtues. The Holy Spirit formed Jesus only through her, and he forms the members of the Mystical Body and dispenses his gifts and favors only through her.<sup>79</sup>

In the Incarnation, Jesus entrusted Himself totally to Mary as her Son, to depend entirely upon her as any child depends upon his mother. She cooperated with God to give life to

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<sup>77</sup> TD 22

<sup>78</sup> Cf. TD, 243-248

<sup>79</sup> TD 140

Jesus and as His mother she educated and formed Him as He grew to maturity. Then to help the reader understand Mary's role in the Christian life Montfort goes on to highlight the correspondence between the Incarnation and the Cross in God's saving plan. Just as Mary cooperated with God to give life to Jesus in the Incarnation, she cooperated with Christ at the Cross to give life to mankind dead in sin. Concerning her cooperation in the sacrifice of Jesus Montfort says,

Even at his death she had to be present so that he might be united with her in one sacrifice and be immolated with her consent to the eternal Father, just as formerly Isaac was offered in sacrifice by Abraham when he accepted the will of God.<sup>80</sup>

The self-emptying love of Christ upon the Cross is the source of the world's salvation. At the Cross Mary united her maternal love to the redemptive love of Jesus poured out for the life of the world. Therefore, the life of grace that flows from the Cross of Christ is the fruit of the union between the redemptive love of Jesus and the maternal love of Mary. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

In this way Mary cooperated with Christ to give supernatural life to mankind, the same Life we receive in Baptism and in all the sacraments. Through this correspondence between the Incarnation and the Cross we see that Mary had an essential role in conceiving Jesus in her womb and in the conception of the life of the Church. Continuing with this correlation, just as in the Incarnation, once the baptized have received the life of grace, Mary continues to cooperate with God as a mother to educate and form the baptized in the image of her Son. Montfort says, "Mary has received from God a far-reaching dominion over the souls of the elect."<sup>81</sup> For God has given Mary a role to

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<sup>80</sup> TD 18

<sup>81</sup> TD 37

“conceive them, nourish them, and bring them forth to eternal life as their mother.”<sup>82</sup> God has given this role to Mary because she is “the inseparable associate of the Holy Spirit in all these works of grace.”<sup>83</sup> Montfort says, “As she was the way by which Jesus first came to us, she will again be the way by which he will come to us the second time though not in the same manner.”<sup>84</sup> For St. Louis de Montfort, this is the heart of the divine economy.<sup>85</sup>

## **B. Baptism - total gift of self to Christ**

The life of grace that is the fruit of the redemptive love of Jesus and the maternal love of Mary comes to mankind through faith and baptism. Once we receive the life of Jesus, our vocation is to be completely conformed to Him. By baptism a covenant exchange takes place. Jesus gives Himself to the believer, pouring His divine life into the soul of the baptized, taking possession of the whole person in order to form him in His image. Through the vows of baptism the Christian gives himself to Jesus to belong to Him. In this covenant exchange there are two movements, God giving Himself to the believer and the baptized giving himself to Christ. Yet baptism is just the beginning of this consecration, it is just the beginning of our union with Christ. Our vocation as Christians is to make a total permanent gift of self to Jesus to be perfectly conformed to Him.

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<sup>82</sup> TD 37

<sup>83</sup> TD 37

<sup>84</sup> TD 50

<sup>85</sup> Montfort gives his presentation of the divine economy hinging on the mystery of the Incarnation in articles 14-39, and summarizes it in articles 139-140, of *True Devotion to Mary*.

St. Louis de Montfort calls this total permanent gift of self to Christ in baptism, this total belonging and complete dependence upon Him, “slavery.”<sup>86</sup> This is not something new with Montfort since he was following the patristic and medieval tradition of “Holy Slavery.” This type of slavery has nothing to do with oppression, severity or the loss of freedom. This is not a forced slavery, but slavery chosen out of the fullness of freedom in order to love and serve Jesus Christ unconditionally. For Montfort, “slavery” in this sense meant belonging to the beloved in order to possess Him more fully. In this manner we become slaves of Christ through baptism. Montfort highlights this point:

Before baptism every Christian was a slave of the devil because he belonged to him. At baptism he has either personally or through his sponsors solemnly renounced Satan, his seductions and his works. He has chosen Jesus as his Master and sovereign Lord and undertaken to depend upon him as a slave of Love.<sup>87</sup>

On the part of the baptized, slavery to Jesus expresses a total permanent gift of self to Christ in order to belong fully to Him. This relationship is characterized by our absolute dependence upon Him. On the part of Christ, slavery expresses His Sovereignty and His solicitude on which we depend. Montfort says,

From what Jesus Christ is in regard to us we must conclude, as St. Paul says, that we belong not to ourselves but entirely to him as his members and his slaves, for he bought us at an infinite price – the shedding of his Precious Blood (1 Cor. 6:19; 12:27). Before baptism, we belonged to the devil as slaves, but baptism made us in very truth slaves of Jesus.<sup>88</sup>

Jesus made clear our unbounded dependence upon Him when He said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”<sup>89</sup> Absolute dependence upon Jesus Christ is the

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<sup>86</sup> TD 68-73, 126

<sup>87</sup> TD 126

<sup>88</sup> TD 68

<sup>89</sup> John 15:5

central idea for Montfort. He emphasizes this dependence upon Christ by reminding us that in Scripture the Holy Spirit illustrates the radical dependence of the believer upon God by comparing us to “trees planted along the waters of grace” and “branches of the vine of which Jesus is the stem” and the “flock of sheep of which Jesus is the shepherd.”<sup>90</sup> We never have to fear that Montfort replaces Christ with Mary in his devotion. He is adamant that “these words of the Holy Spirit show that Jesus is the sole source and must be the sole end of all our good works.”<sup>91</sup> For Montfort to serve Jesus as a slave of love means “to belong totally to the beloved”<sup>92</sup> and to “serve him unconditionally.”<sup>93</sup> In articles 69-73, Montfort explains two ways of belonging to another: as a servant, which in our day would be understood as an employee, or as a slave, one who is “totally dependent on another for life.”<sup>94</sup> In article 72 Montfort explains that the Latin word “servus” could only have meant “slave” according to the authors of Scripture, because servants, as we know them today, did not exist. A Christian could not be an employee of Christ for only a fixed period of time or a set wage. Therefore, a Christian must belong to Christ in the second manner, that of slavery.

Montfort says there are three kinds of slavery, natural, enforced and voluntary.<sup>95</sup> By voluntary slavery we choose freely to belong entirely to God and to serve Him before all things. St. Louis goes on to explain the key difference between a servant and a slave.

There is a world of difference between a servant and a slave. A servant does not give his employer all he is, all he has, and all he can acquire by himself or through others. A slave however, gives himself to his master completely and exclusively

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<sup>90</sup> TD 68

<sup>91</sup> TD 68

<sup>92</sup> TD 71

<sup>93</sup> TD 73

<sup>94</sup> TD 69

<sup>95</sup> TD 70



with all he has and all he can acquire. A servant demands wages for the service rendered to his employer. A slave, on the other hand, can expect nothing. A servant can leave his employer whenever he pleases. A servant is in his employer's service only for a time; a slave for always.<sup>96</sup>

No other human state involves belonging more completely to another than slavery. Among Christian peoples, nothing makes a person belong more completely to Jesus and his holy mother than volunteer slavery.<sup>97</sup>

St. Louis teaches that this slavery of love is based on imitating the lives of Jesus, Mary and the first Christian community as it is spoken of in the teaching of Sacred Scripture.

On this point Montfort states,

Our Lord Himself gave us the example of this when out of love for us he 'took the form of a slave.' (Philippians 2:7) Our Lady gave us the same example when she called herself the handmaid or slave of the Lord (Luke 1:38). The Apostle considered it an honor to be called 'slave of Christ' (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philemon 1:1). Several times in Holy Scripture, Christians are referred to as 'slaves of Christ' (1 Corinthians 7:22; 2 Timothy 2:24)<sup>98</sup>

Through this discussion on slavery, Montfort wants to teach Christians the true goal of life and the heart of our baptismal consecration. The Christian vocation is to give a total permanent gift of self to Christ in order to be perfectly conformed, united and consecrated to Him. "I say we must belong to Jesus and serve Him not just as hired servants but as willing slaves who, moved by generous love, commit themselves to his service after the manner of slaves for the honor of belonging to him."<sup>99</sup>

If "slavery" expresses the desire to belong totally to Christ so that we may possess Him in the most abundant way and be divinized by His presence, then, what is the most effective means to belong fully to Christ? What is the most effective means to accomplish

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<sup>96</sup> TD 71

<sup>97</sup> TD 71

<sup>98</sup> TD 72

<sup>99</sup> TD 73

our consecration? To this question Montfort asks, how did Jesus give Himself to humanity in the first place? By becoming a slave in the womb of Mary. Therefore we give ourselves to Christ in order to belong to Him in the same way, by becoming a slave of Jesus in Mary.

Our good Master stooped to enclose himself in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, a captive but loving slave, and to make himself subject to her for thirty years... He did not choose to give himself in a direct manner to the human race though he could easily have done so. He chose to come through the Virgin Mary. Thus he did not come into the world independently of others in the flower of his manhood, but he came as a frail little child dependent on the care and attention of his mother. Consumed with the desire to give glory to God, his Father, and save the human race, he saw no better or shorter way to do so than by submitting himself completely to Mary.<sup>100</sup>

For Montfort the principal mystery to be imitated in the devotion he proposes is the Incarnation. We are to imitate the wondrous dependence which God the Son chose to have on Mary as her infant Son dwelling in her womb for nine months. "This dependence is revealed especially in this mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of the Blessed Mother, depending on her for everything."<sup>101</sup> Montfort calls Jesus a "captive" and a "slave" to Mary in order to highlight the total dependence Jesus willed to have on His "most worthy Mother."<sup>102</sup> As Christians we are called to live in imitation of Jesus in every aspect of His life. We too are called to imitate the total dependence of Jesus on His Mother Mary that began in her womb and continued throughout His life.

Though Montfort speaks of "slavery to Mary" he teaches that it is more precise to say "slavery of Jesus *in* Mary" because in this devotion the Christian understands oneself

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<sup>100</sup> TD 139

<sup>101</sup> TD 243a, cf. TD 139

<sup>102</sup> TD 243b

as *in* Mary just as Christ was *in* Mary as her child.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, according to Montfort the way to understand Mary's role is not that of a "Master" but as a mother to whom Jesus willed to entrust himself and depend upon entirely as her child. In the Incarnation Mary had a maternal role toward Christ. She formed Him, protected Him, nourished Him, educated, influenced and provided for Him, first in her womb and then under her maternal presence throughout His life. Jesus gave Himself to humanity through His filial relationship with Mary and this is how He wills that we give ourselves to Him, through a filial relationship with her. This is the economy of salvation established by the Incarnation. In imitation of Christ we are invited to entrust ourselves to Mary's maternal care because her maternity for Him continues in the members of His Body since His life continues in the baptized. Montfort concludes,

Following therefore the teaching of the saints and of many great men we can call ourselves, and become, the loving slaves of our Blessed Lady in order to become more perfect slaves of Jesus. Mary is the means our Lord chose to come to us and she is also the means we should choose to go to him, for she is not like other creatures who tend rather to lead us away from God than towards him, if we are over attached to them. Mary's strongest inclination is to unite us to Jesus, her Son, and her Son's strongest wish is that we come to him through his Blessed Mother.<sup>104</sup>

### **C. Selfishness - root of our failure to fulfill the consecration**

Through baptism a covenant exchange begins in which there are two movements. First, God consecrates, He gives Himself to man. Second, the baptized returns a gift of self to God through the course of life. In this covenant exchange God is always faithful, but all too often we are not. We vow to give ourselves totally to God in love, but we fail to give a complete gift of self because of sin and selfishness. The problem lies in the fact

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<sup>103</sup> TD 244 - 245

<sup>104</sup> TD 75

that we fail to respond or cooperate with God's grace because of self-love and self-will.

Consequently, our union with God, our consecration, goes unfulfilled. Montfort explains:

When pure, clear water is poured into a foul smelling jug, or wine into an unwashed cask that previously contained another wine, the clear water and the good wine are tainted and readily acquire an unpleasant odor. In the same way when God pours into our soul, infected by original and actual sin, the heavenly waters of his grace or the delicious wines of his love, his gifts are usually spoiled and tainted by evil sediment left in us by sin.<sup>105</sup>

Here Montfort goes right to the heart of the matter. We must be rid of selfishness in order to be conformed and united to Christ.<sup>106</sup> Then he gives a clear direction to follow to root out our self-love and self-will that block union with God. Christ commanded that if anyone wishes to follow him, he must die to self and give himself in love. Thus, if we want to be conformed to Christ we too must imitate His dying to self, His self-emptying.<sup>107</sup> To accomplish this we must die daily to ourselves, so that we may see as Christ sees, live as He lived and love as He loved, to be conformed and united with Him.<sup>108</sup> We must choose among all the devotions one that will lead to "emptying ourselves of self-love, filling ourselves with God, and attaining perfection."<sup>109</sup> When Christ emptied Himself and took the form of a slave to save mankind, He did so by entrusting Himself to the maternal care of Mary. We are called to imitate His self-emptying.

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<sup>105</sup> TD 78

<sup>106</sup> TD 79

<sup>107</sup> TD 80

<sup>108</sup> TD 81

<sup>109</sup> TD 82

#### **D. Mary -given to help conform us to Christ**

At this point, Montfort asks a question, “Are we pure enough to be united directly to Christ without any help?”<sup>110</sup> Do we not fail in our union with Him because of our selfishness? Then “let us not be afraid to say with St. Bernard that we need a mediator with the Mediator himself, and the divinely honored Mary is the one most able to fulfill this office of love.”<sup>111</sup> St. Louis says that God saw our helplessness and had pity on us. Because of our sin, our weakness and our failure to give ourselves totally to Christ to complete our baptismal consecration, Jesus gave Mary to each Christian to be our Mother, that through the power of the Holy Spirit, she may educate and form us in the image of Christ. As our mother she helps us respond to the love, mercy and grace of Christ in order to be conformed completely to Him.

#### **E. Intercession - Mary's means of helping her children**

Montfort teaches that entrusting oneself to Mary is the greatest means to being conformed perfectly to Christ.<sup>112</sup> Why is Mary able to accomplish this? First, Mary is the human person most fully conformed to Jesus. Second, according to God’s plan of salvation she has been given the mission of forming Jesus in her by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through grace His life now dwells in us. In imitation of Jesus, we entrust ourselves to her so that by the Holy Spirit, in whose action she cooperates with a mother’s love, she may form us more completely in the image of her Son. Mary accomplishes this by interceding to dispose and inspire her children to know and do the will of the Father. This is the economy God established for our salvation. Therefore devotion to Mary is the

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<sup>110</sup> TD 85

<sup>111</sup> TD 85

<sup>112</sup> Cf. TD 22-35, 120-134

most effective means to help us live out our baptism and in this manner it is the perfect renewal of our baptism. Montfort sums this up nicely:

Jesus is still as much as ever the fruit of Mary, as heaven and earth repeat thousands of times a day, 'Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.' It is therefore certain that Jesus is the fruit and gift of Mary for every single man who possesses him, just as truly as he is for all mankind. Consequently, if any of the faithful have Jesus formed in their heart they can boldly say, 'It is thanks to Mary that what I possess is Jesus, her fruit, and without her I would not have him.' We can attribute more truly to her what St. Paul said of himself, 'I am in labor again with all the children of God until Jesus Christ, my Son, is formed in them to the fullness of his age.' St. Augustine, surpassing himself as well as all that I have said so far, affirms that in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God all the predestinate, while in the world, are hidden in the womb of the Blessed Virgin where they are protected, nourished, cared for and developed by this good Mother, until the day she brings them forth to a life of glory after death, which the Church calls the birthday of the just.<sup>113</sup>

#### **F. Consecration to Jesus through Mary**

Having detailed his understanding of Mary's role as integral to God's saving design, Montfort concludes that this devotion is not only reasonable, it is necessary in order to imitate Christ fully. The devotion Montfort teaches consists in giving oneself entirely to Mary in order to belong entirely to Jesus through her.<sup>114</sup> We give "our body with all its senses and members; our soul with its faculties; our present material possessions and all we shall acquire in the future; our interior and spiritual possessions, that is, our merits, virtues and good actions of the past, the present, and the future."<sup>115</sup> It follows then that by this devotion we give to Jesus all we can possibly give him, and in the most perfect manner, that is through the hands of Mary.<sup>116</sup> How can he justify such a radical gift of self to Mary? His justification is at the very heart of Christianity. We are

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<sup>113</sup> TD 33

<sup>114</sup> TD 121

<sup>115</sup> TD 121

<sup>116</sup> TD 123

called to imitate Christ in all things, even His relationship with His Mother. This relationship began in the Incarnation when Christ entrusted Himself into her womb to depend on her entirely. Montfort says,

Loving slaves of Jesus in Mary should hold in high esteem devotion to Jesus, the Word of God, in the great mystery of the Incarnation, March 25<sup>th</sup>, which is the mystery proper to this devotion, because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit for the following reasons: That we might honor and imitate the wondrous dependence which the Son of God chose to have on Mary, for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of man. This dependence is revealed especially in this mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his blessed Mother, depending on her for everything.<sup>117</sup>

Therefore, the foundation upon which Montfort builds his devotion to Mary is that of Jesus Christ. St. Paul says, “For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”<sup>118</sup> Jesus is the first to live devotion to Mary since Jesus was the first to entrust Himself totally to her and to depend entirely upon her as He lived a filial relationship with her. Montfort wants us to understand clearly that devotion to Mary is an imitation of the living relationship between Jesus and Mary. In another place Montfort says,

God-made-man found freedom in imprisoning himself in (Mary’s) womb... He glorified his independence and his majesty in depending upon this lovable virgin in his conception, his birth, his presentation in the temple, and in the thirty years of his hidden life... It was Mary who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, reared him and sacrificed him for us... Jesus gave more glory to God his Father by submitting to his mother for thirty years than he would have given him had he converted the whole world by working the greatest miracles. How highly then do we glorify God when to please Him we submit ourselves to Mary taking Jesus as our soul model.<sup>119</sup>

This filial relationship between Jesus and Mary was established by the

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<sup>117</sup> TD 243

<sup>118</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11

<sup>119</sup> TD 18

Incarnation. The Incarnation is the prototype of the way God wills to save all mankind. To follow God's plan of salvation is to live in imitation of Jesus' relationship with Mary. Thus the most effective means to union with Christ is to live in imitation of His relationship with His Mother Mary.

Jesus entrusted Himself entirely to Mary as a little babe in her womb and then lived as a helpless child with a humanity like ours in all ways but sin. In this state He needed to be taught and guided by Mary in the same way every child needs the care and education of his mother. In imitation of Him we are called to do the same. When we entrust our intellect, our will and everything to Mary as her possession we entrust all that is ours to her maternal influence so that she may dispose and inspire us to think and live in conformity with Christ.<sup>120</sup> When we live as Jesus did toward Mary we experience in ourselves her maternal influence toward Him. Montfort says, "Anyone who in this way consecrates and sacrifices himself voluntarily to Jesus through Mary may no longer dispose of the value of any of his good actions. All his sufferings, all his thoughts, words, and deeds belong to Mary. She can then dispose of them in accordance with the will of her Son and for his greater glory."<sup>121</sup> To those who give themselves to Jesus through Mary, she says, "Do whatever he tells you." She helps them to do his will and to experience the manifestation of His glory.

## II. The Practice of *True Devotion*

Montfort begins his teaching on the practice of true devotion to Mary by reminding us that our first vocation is to respond with a complete gift of self to God's gift

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<sup>120</sup> TD 124

<sup>121</sup> TD 124



of Himself. This is the origin of our consecration, God has given Himself to us first through baptism. Having received the life of Christ our vocation is to cooperate with God to nurture and increase His life within us that we may be fully conformed and united to Him. To accomplish this we must be progressively purified of selfishness, of all that stands in the way of our union with Him.<sup>122</sup> Through baptism we begin to live not only by our natural life but also by the supernatural life of Jesus dwelling in our soul. Mary has a specific role to play to help us achieve our goal of conformity to Christ. She has this singular role due to the fact that she was the most perfectly conformed human person to Christ. And by virtue of the economy of salvation manifested in the Incarnation. Just as Mary cooperated with God to educate and form Jesus, now, according to the same divine plan, Mary cooperates with the Holy Spirit to educate and form us in the image of Jesus. This is why Montfort calls Mary the Mold of God. Consequently, he sees her as the most effective means for consecration and conformity to Jesus. For this reason he encourages us to give oneself totally to Mary to allow her to do in our soul all that was accomplished in her and all she did in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>123</sup>

#### **A. Mary is the Mold of God**

We may conform ourselves to Christ in two ways, says St. Louis de Montfort. First, like sculptors: “Many of them rely on their own skill, ingenuity and art and chip away endlessly with mallet and chisel at hard stone or badly prepared wood, in an effort to produce a likeness of our Lord. At times, they do not manage to produce a recognizable likeness either because they lack knowledge and experience of the person of Jesus or

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<sup>122</sup> TD 120

<sup>123</sup> Cf. TD 120

because a clumsy stroke has spoiled the whole work.”<sup>124</sup> Alternately, we may be like smelters or molders, “who have discovered the beautiful mold of Mary where Jesus was so divinely and so naturally formed. They do not rely on their own skill but on the perfection of the mold. They cast and lose themselves in Mary where they become true models of her Son.”<sup>125</sup> Immediately after this beautiful comparison, our saint gives us a sobering reminder of the material we are working with, a human nature that tends toward self-love and self-will. He says to us, “But remember that only molten and liquefied substances may be poured into a mold. That means that you must crush and melt down the old Adam in you if you wish to acquire the likeness of the new Adam in Mary.”<sup>126</sup>

Again, Jesus is the one we must imitate in all things. Christ Jesus emptied Himself into the mold that is Mary when He became Incarnate in her womb. In imitation of Him we should give ourselves totally to Mary, as into her womb, that in this mold of God we too may be conformed to the image of Christ through her maternal intercession, disposing and inspiring us to do His will. For this reason Montfort calls Mary, “a holy place, a holy of holies, in which saints are formed and molded.” Montfort emphasizes this point saying, “Mary is a mold capable of forming people into the image of the God-man. Anyone who is cast into this divine mold is quickly shaped and molded into Jesus and Jesus into Him. At little cost and in a short time he will become Christ-like since he is cast into the very

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<sup>124</sup> TD 220

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

same mold that fashioned the God-man.”<sup>127</sup> We must always remember that this is carried forth by the power of the Holy Spirit Who fashioned Christ through the maternal cooperation of Mary and wills to fashion the members of His Body in the same way.

Montfort bases his recommendations for the practice of True Devotion on this idea of Mary as the mold of God. He first explains the interior practices of this devotion, which are the very heart of any devotion. Montfort says that the interior practices may be expressed in four words, “doing everything THROUGH Mary, WITH Mary, IN Mary and FOR Mary, in order to do it more perfectly *through* Jesus, *with* Jesus, *in* Jesus and *for* Jesus.”<sup>128</sup> He then goes on to speak of the exterior practices and concludes with the wonderful effects of devotion to Mary.

## **B. Interior Practices of *True Devotion***

### **1. Through Mary**

According to Montfort we must do everything *through* Mary. That is, “We must obey her always and be led in all things by her spirit, which is the Holy Spirit.”<sup>129</sup> The goal of the Christian life is to be perfectly conformed to Jesus Christ by living in imitation of Him. Jesus renounced Himself, emptied Himself,<sup>130</sup> and gave Himself totally to Mary in the Incarnation to be her Son, to depend on her, obey her, and be led by her in all things. Through the grace of baptism, Jesus continues to live His life in us. In and through us, Jesus desires to continue His relationship with His mother. Therefore, we are called to live in union and in imitation of Jesus’ relationship with her. In this way we

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<sup>127</sup> TD 219

<sup>128</sup> TD 257

<sup>129</sup> TD 258

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Philippians 2:5-6

allow her to educate, form, lead and guide us as we grow in conformity with Christ. If we want to live in imitation of Jesus' relationship with Mary we must follow His example. We must empty ourselves renounce our own spirit, our own views and our own will. Then we must give ourselves to Mary, to obey her and be led by her in all things with the love of a son for his mother. This is what it means to live *through* Mary.<sup>131</sup> We may begin to live more fully through Mary by consecrating ourselves to Jesus through Mary.

#### *Consecration to Jesus through Mary*

In articles 227 – 233, St. Louis de Montfort outlines a thirty-three day preparation to give oneself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary. The first twelve days are centered on emptying oneself of the spirit of the world, which is opposed to the Spirit of Jesus. The next twenty-one days are spent imbuing oneself with the Spirit of Jesus through the maternal help of Mary.<sup>132</sup> At the end of thirty-three days one should go to confession and receive Holy Communion with the intention of giving oneself to Jesus through Mary as His slave of love. Then one must recite the consecration Montfort gives, which follows, in his work, *Love of Eternal Wisdom*:<sup>133</sup>

Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, most lovable and adorable Jesus, true God and true man, only Son of the eternal Father and of Mary always Virgin, I adore you profoundly, dwelling in the splendor of your Father from all eternity and in the virginal womb of Mary, your most worthy Mother, at the time of your Incarnation.

I thank you for having emptied yourself in assuming the condition of a slave to set me free from the cruel slavery of the evil one. I praise and glorify you for having willingly chosen to obey Mary, your holy mother, in all things, so that through her I may be your faithful slave of love.

But I must confess that I have not kept the vows and promises, which I made to you so solemnly at my baptism. I have not fulfilled my obligations, and I do not deserve to be called your child or even your slave. Since I cannot lay claim

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<sup>131</sup> TD 259

<sup>132</sup> TD 227

<sup>133</sup> TD 231

to anything except what merits your rejection and displeasure, I dare no longer approach the holiness of your majesty on my own. That is why I turn to the intercession and the mercy of your holy Mother, whom you yourself have given me to mediate with you. Through her I hope to obtain from you contrition and pardon for my sins, and that Wisdom whom I desire to dwell in me always.

I turn to you, then, Mary Immaculate, living tabernacle of God, in whom eternal Wisdom willed to receive the adoration of both men and angels. I greet you as Queen of heaven and earth, for all that is under God has been made subject to your sovereignty. I call upon you, the unfailing refuge of sinners, confident of your mercy that has never forsaken anyone. Grant my desire for divine Wisdom and, in support of my petition, accept the promises and the offering of myself which I now make, conscious of my unworthiness.

I, an unfaithful sinner, renew and ratify today through you my baptismal promises. I renounce forever Satan, his empty promises, and his evil designs, and I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life, and to be more faithful to him than I have been till now.

This day, with the whole court of heaven as witness, I choose you, Mary, as my Mother and Queen. I surrender and consecrate myself to you, body and soul, as your slave, with all that I possess, both spiritual and material, even including the value of all my good actions, past, present, and to come. I give you the full right to dispose of me and all that belongs to me, without any reservations, in whatever way you please, for the greater glory of God in time and throughout eternity.

Accept, gracious Virgin, this little offering of my slavery to honor and imitate the obedience which Eternal Wisdom willingly chose to have towards you, his Mother, I wish to acknowledge the authority which both of you have over this little worm and pitiful sinner. By it I wish also to thank God for the privileges bestowed on you by the Blessed Trinity. I declare that for the future I will try to honor and obey you in all things as your true slave of love.

O admirable mother, present me to your dear Son as his slave now and for always, so that he who redeemed me through you, will now receive me through you. Mother of mercy, grant me the favor of obtaining the true Wisdom of God, and so make me one of those whom you love, teach and guide, whom you nourish and protect as your children and slaves.

Virgin most faithful, make me in everything so committed a disciple, imitator, and slave of Jesus, your Son, incarnate Wisdom, that I may become, through your intercession and example, fully mature with the fullness which Jesus possessed on earth, and with the fullness of his glory in heaven. Amen.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> St. Louis de Montfort, *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, articles 223 – 227, found in, *God Alone*, the Collected Works of St. Louis de Montfort, Montfort Publication, Bay Shore, NY, 1997, p. 112-114.

There are great many authors who have commented at length on this consecration and their analysis is a very valuable contribution to helping the faithful live out Montfort's devotion.<sup>135</sup> One significant contribution Montfort made to the development of the spirituality of Holy Slavery was the way in which he corrected the ambiguities resulting from the expression "slavery to Mary" or "consecration to Mary" common in the Confraternities of Holy Slavery by relating the gift of self directly to Christ.<sup>136</sup> In Montfort the gift of self is made to Jesus through the hands of Mary. He expressed his gift of self in terms of "*slavery of Jesus in Mary*" or "*consecration to Jesus through Mary*."<sup>137</sup> By expressing the devotion in this way he made clear that Mary is the means by which the gift is given rather than the goal, which must be God alone.<sup>138</sup>

At this time we will highlight some of the key points of Montfort's consecration. Above all, this consecration is based on God's eternal plan of salvation. In the very first line of *True Devotion* Montfort says, "It is through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world."<sup>139</sup> In his act of consecration he says, "O admirable mother, present me to your dear Son as

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. A. Bossard, *True Devotion*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bay Shore, NY, 1994, p. 1209; J. Dayet, *Notre Consecration: Le mot de la tradition*, in *La Revue des Pretres de Marie Reine des Coeurs*, 26, 1939, 33-44; S. De Fiores and S. Meo, Edizioni Paoline, Rome, 398-40; Arthur Calkins, *Totus Tuus*, *John Paul II's Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment*, Academy of the Immaculate, Libertyville, IL, 1992; R. Deville, *The French School of Spirituality*, p. 198ff; P. Gaffney, *Consecration*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, N.Y., 1994, p. 199-234; T. Koehler, *Slavery of Love*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bayshore, p. 1157-1168; Laurentin, Fr. Rene, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1992, p. 108-117; E. Neubert, *Life of Union with Mary*, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, WI, 1959, p. 15ff.

<sup>136</sup> Koehler, Fr. Theodore, *Holy Slavery of Love, Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bay Shore, NY, 1994, p. 1163, footnote 25.

<sup>137</sup> TD 236--237, 244-245, 252, *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, 219.

<sup>138</sup> P. Gaffney explains in detail the ways in which Montfort's consecration is different from that of the consecrations found in the Confraternities of Holy Slavery in his article, *Consecration*, in *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 206; R. Laurentin covered this judiciously in his book, *Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort*, Paris, OEIL, 1984, p. 54, Laurentin also covers this in *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, p. 54.

<sup>139</sup> TD 1

his slave now and for always, so that he who redeemed me through you, will now receive me through you.”<sup>140</sup> God gave Himself to us in the Incarnation through Mary. Following this model, we give ourselves to Him through Mary. Commenting of this point Fr. Laurentin says,

Grignion de Montfort was dominated by the following conviction: that God literally came to men through Mary. Hence he emphasized inviting us to go back to God through her. Since Mary was chosen to realize “the admirable exchange” by which God became man in order to communicate his Divinity to us, it follows that she is the way and the means of our consecration.”<sup>141</sup>

That Consecration is absolutely Christocentric is our second point. Montfort’s unique contribution to devotion to Mary was to demonstrate that the goal of the consecration was union with Jesus Christ through the perfect means of Mary’s maternal cooperation. In his consecration he says, “I give myself completely to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Wisdom, to carry my cross after him for the rest of my life, and to be more faithful to him than I have ever been before.”<sup>142</sup> There is no mistaking Montfort here. Jesus is the ultimate end of the gift of self. In fact, he gives this as the first fundamental truth in regard to devotion to Mary. He is emphatic, if the goal is not Jesus or if devotion to Mary distracts us from Christ, then it must be seen as a deception of the devil.<sup>143</sup> He says,

Jesus, our Savior, true God and true man must be the ultimate end of all our other devotions; otherwise they would be false and misleading. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end of everything. “We labor,” says St. Paul. “only to make all men perfect in Christ.” For in him alone dwells the entire fullness of the divinity and the complete fullness of grace, virtue and perfection. In him alone we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; he is the only teacher from whom we must learn; the only Lord on whom we should depend; the only Head to whom we should be united and the only model that we should imitate. He is the only Physician that can heal us; the only Shepherd that can feed us; the only Way that

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<sup>140</sup> *Love of Eternal Wisdom* 226

<sup>141</sup> Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, p. 192.

<sup>142</sup> *Love of Eternal Wisdom* 225

<sup>143</sup> TD 62

can lead us; the only Truth that we can believe; the only Life that can animate us. He alone is everything to us and he alone can satisfy all our desires.<sup>144</sup>

We see in Montfort's consecration that Mary is not the goal, she is the perfect means the Father has given mankind to achieve union with His Son. P. Gaffney remarks, "Montfort makes it clear from the outset that there is absolutely no such thing as consecration – in the strict sense of the term – to Mary. In his eyes, that would be nothing short of blasphemous, for Mary is in herself nothing more than a creature. Mary can only unite us with Christ."<sup>145</sup>

Our third point is that consecration to Mary, as Montfort presents it, is in imitation of Christ, of His slavery to Mary. Jesus emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, as St. Paul tells us<sup>146</sup>, in the womb of Mary, so that He could save mankind from the slavery of the devil. In imitation of Christ we give ourselves to Mary in the same way. Montfort says, "Accept, gracious Virgin, this little offering of my slavery to honor and imitate the obedience which Eternal Wisdom willingly chose to have towards you, his Mother."<sup>147</sup>

That consecration to Mary is based on imitation of Christ is the very heart of devotion to her says Emil Neubert,

If we examine closely the role of Mary in our regard, we shall see that this special devotion should have a distinct character, that it should take the form of a truly filial piety. Indeed, since Mary is our true supernatural Mother, more mother than any other mother, we ought to adopt the dispositions of a child in her regard. These dispositions should not be those of an ordinary son for his mother, but those of Jesus to Mary. In truth, it is because we are other Christ's that we are children of Mary. As other Christ's we should assume the attitudes of our elder Brother. He has given us an example that as He has done we should do also. We should

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<sup>144</sup> TD 61

<sup>145</sup> P. Gaffney, *Consecration*, p. 208.

<sup>146</sup> Philippians 2:7

<sup>147</sup> *Love of Eternal Wisdom* 226



endeavor to imitate the humility of Jesus, His patience, His gentleness, and therefore His filial piety to His Mother.<sup>148</sup>

The fourth point we wish to emphasize concerning this consecration is that it is a *total* gift of self to Jesus. According to Montfort, we give our body and soul to Mary as her slave, with all we possess, physically and spiritually, even the value of all our good actions past, present and future. We even give her the full right of disposing us as she pleases for our own good and the greater glory of God.<sup>149</sup> Montfort goes into such great detail in order to convey the absolute totality of the gift of self to Christ. There is nothing that is not included. We empty ourselves totally to Christ in the way He emptied Himself to humanity, through Mary. We empty ourselves completely that we may be entirely filled or consecrated by His presence and thus divinized by Him. This follows the same path in which He gave His presence to the world in the Incarnation, through Mary. Now, our divinization is the purpose of baptism. Consequently, consecration to Jesus through Mary accomplished through this total self-emptying so that we can be filled and conformed to Christ, becomes the perfect means to fulfill the purpose of baptism.

This becomes our fifth point, consecration is a perfect renewal of baptism. Baptism is an act whereby, on our part as an adult or through our parents as an infant, we give ourselves completely to God in Christ. This act should at some point develop into the corresponding interior attitude that enables a person to live out this gift of self through love of God and neighbor. It is exactly in these terms that Montfort understands his consecration. He understands consecration to Jesus through Mary to express an act of the will giving oneself totally to God and then living this interior attitude in the service of

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<sup>148</sup> Emile Neubert, *Our Mother*, Grail Pub., St. Meinrad IN, 1953 p. 77.

<sup>149</sup> *Love of Eternal Wisdom* 225

God and neighbor. In this way consecration seeks to recommit the baptized to their original vows of baptism. Consecration has an added dimension. It is Marian. We specifically give ourselves to Mary to employ her maternal help as the most effective means to unity and conformity with Christ, something, which was not done at baptism. P. Gaffney sums up nicely Montfort's thought on this point,

The saint insists that there are three reasons the Consecration should be called "perfect" renewal of the vows of Baptism. First, "*in baptism we ordinarily speak by the mouth of another, our godfather or godmother, and so we give ourselves to Jesus Christ not by ourselves but through another. But in this devotion we do it by ourselves, voluntarily, knowing what we are doing*" (TD 126). It can be said that, whether Baptism took place when one was an infant or an adult, the perfect consecration is the occasion for and ever deepening personal commitment to Jesus Christ, a renewal of the very foundation of our faith. Second, in Baptism we do not "*give Him [the Lord] the value of all our good actions,*" as was noted above. Third, in Baptism "*we do not give ourselves to Jesus by the hands of Mary, at least not in an explicit manner*" (TD 126), as we do in the perfect consecration."<sup>150</sup>

The final point we will make concerning the consecration is one that has to do with possible misconceptions with the attitude Montfort portrays toward Christ. In the consecration Montfort says,

Since I cannot lay claim to anything except what merits your rejection and displeasure, I dare no longer approach the holiness of your majesty on my own. That is why I turn to the intercession and the mercy of your holy Mother, whom you yourself have given me to mediate with you.<sup>151</sup>

It may appear as if Montfort gives himself to Mary, the Mother of Mercy because He fears the wrath of Christ the severe Judge and so he goes to her since he cannot go directly to Christ. Throughout the whole of his work *Love of Eternal Wisdom* we see that this is not the way Montfort looks at Christ. Montfort explains why we go to Mary in the

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<sup>150</sup> P. Gaffney, *Consecration*, p. 212 – 213.

<sup>151</sup> TD 223

passage we cited above. We turn to the intercession and mercy of Mary because Christ Himself has given her to us to help us into union with Him. Montfort says of Christ, “whom you yourself have given me to mediate with you.” According to Montfort, Christ has given Mary to us as a Mother to aid us in our weakness. We fail to come into a more perfect union with Christ not because He is severe or because of some weakness on His part. We fail in union because God has made us free and in our weakness we fail to freely empty ourselves that we may be united with Him. Christ knows our weakness. Therefore, as an act of His mercy He gives us Mary His Mother, to be our Mother, to help us into union with Him by her maternal intercession. On this point T. Koehler says,

Every Christian spirituality warns its followers of the difficulty of renouncing sin and of making the uphill journey to holiness (cf. TD 78ff). Through the Slavery of Love we surrender our whole being and life to Mary, thus enabling her to give us a share of her dispositions, to unite us perfectly with Jesus and to form him more fully in us. The Marian way is an easy, short, perfect, secure way.<sup>152</sup>

#### *Renewing our consecration to Jesus through Mary*

Montfort suggests that at least every year, on the same date, one should renew this consecration following the same exercises of preparation for three weeks. But, he goes on to say that one may and should renew the gift of self to Jesus through Mary every month or even every day by this short prayer, “I am all yours and all I have is yours, O dear Jesus, through Mary, your holy Mother.”<sup>153</sup>

Once we have given ourselves totally to Jesus through the hands of Mary, we have more fully and consciously entered into a filial relationship with her in imitation of Jesus’ own relationship with Mary established by the Incarnation. From this point forward, one

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<sup>152</sup> T. Koehler, *Slavery of Love*, p. 1165.

<sup>153</sup> TD 233

must live out this relationship of a child toward a perfect mother daily and even moment-by-moment. We are to live out a relationship of total dependence and constant conversation with Mary as a little child with his mother. As we have already stated, Montfort speaks of “slavery to Mary” and “slavery of Jesus in Mary.”<sup>154</sup> It is necessary always to keep in mind that Montfort holds up as the principal mystery of this devotion the Incarnation in which we honor and imitate “the wondrous dependence which God the Son chose to have on Mary” his mother as He became “a captive and slave”<sup>155</sup> in her womb. With the Incarnation Jesus began to live out a filial relationship with Mary since He was her Son and she was His Mother. For Jesus to become a “slave” in her womb is Montfort’s way to describe a total belonging and dependence upon Mary as her child.<sup>156</sup> It is this relationship of total belonging and complete dependence upon Mary as our Mother as the perfect means to union with Christ that Montfort exhorts us to live out. This is how “slavery” is connected to the idea of a “filial relationship” with Mary.

Before doing anything, for example, before getting out of bed, before prayer, before work, study, or any activity whatsoever we should renew our gift of self and union with Mary. Before all that we do, Montfort suggests we first renounce our own will, then give ourselves to Mary to be directed by her and carried forth by her maternal intercession. “This is done easily and quickly by a mere thought, a slight movement of the will or just a few words as – ‘I renounce myself and give myself to you, my dear Mother.’”<sup>157</sup> Montfort continues, “From time to time during an action and after it, we

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<sup>154</sup> TD 244

<sup>155</sup> TD 243a

<sup>156</sup> TD 68-73,126

<sup>157</sup> TD 259

should renew this same act of offering and of union. The more we do so, the quicker we shall grow in holiness and the sooner we shall reach union with Christ, which necessarily follows upon union with Mary, since the spirit of Mary is the spirit of Jesus.”<sup>158</sup>

## 2. With Mary

According to St. Louis, we must do everything *with* Mary, that is, in imitation of her. In everything we do we look upon Mary and think how she would do the same action in our place and then we strive to imitate her.

We must do everything with Mary, that is to say, in all our actions we must look upon Mary, although a simple human being, as the perfect model of every virtue and perfection, fashioned by the Holy Spirit for us to imitate, as far as our limited capacity allows. In every action then we should consider how Mary performed it or how she would perform it if she were in our place.<sup>159</sup>

Montfort continually reminds us that the spirit, the heart and the will of Mary are in perfect union with Jesus.<sup>160</sup> Mary was perfectly conformed and united to Him so that we may now say that Jesus and Mary share one Spirit, and one heart, united in virtue and love. Consequently, to imitate Mary is to imitate Jesus and to imitate Jesus is to imitate Mary. Montfort says,

Remember what I told you before, that Mary is the great, unique mold of God, designed to make living images of God at little expense and in a short time. Anyone who finds this mold and casts himself into it, is soon transformed into our Lord because it is the true likeness of him.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> TD 260

<sup>160</sup> TD 219-222, 260, *Secret of Mary* 16- 18.

<sup>161</sup> TD 260

### 3. In Mary

St. Louis tells us, “We must do everything *in* Mary.”<sup>162</sup> Once we renounce ourselves and give ourselves entirely to Mary and we renew this offering continually, constantly looking to Mary to guide us and to imitate her virtues, then we have begun to live *in* Mary and we must remain *in* Mary, that is, in her presence always. He says, “We should rest there peacefully, rely on her confidently, hide ourselves there with safety, and abandon ourselves unconditionally to her, so that within her virginal bosom We may be nourished with the milk of her grace and her motherly compassion. We may be delivered from all anxiety, fear and scruples. We may be safeguarded from all our enemies, the devil, the world and sin which have never gained admittance here. That is why our Lady says that those who work in her will not sin, that is, those who dwell spiritually in our Lady will never commit serious sin. We may be formed in our Lord and our Lord formed in us, because her womb is, as the early Fathers call it, “the house of the divine secrets where Jesus and all the elect have been conceived.”<sup>163</sup> To live in Mary is to live in union with her, to remain in her presence, in her womb so to speak, relying on her in everything and for everything with the greatest confidence.

### 4. For Mary

Since we have given ourselves totally to Mary, it is only fitting that we do everything *for* her so that she is our means to do everything for Jesus. Montfort wants us not to remain idle and encourages us to rely on her guidance and protection as we risk to undertake great things for our Queen and Mother. Most of all, we must attract everyone to

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<sup>162</sup> TD 261

<sup>163</sup> TD 264

this devotion to Mary so that all may be more quickly and perfectly united to Christ and his Kingdom and Reign extended to every heart.<sup>164</sup> Montfort reminds us here that for devotion to be authentic it must have an attitude of loving service, and it must have an apostolic attitude, for devotion to Mary is truly living in imitation of Him who came not to be served but to serve<sup>165</sup> and establish the Kingdom of God.

### C. Exterior Practices of *True Devotion*

The heart of the spirituality to Jesus through Mary is a lived relationship with her in imitation of Jesus' lived relationship with Mary. Having said this, Montfort also knows the value of exterior practices, for “If properly performed, exterior acts help to foster interior ones.”<sup>166</sup> He begins outlining the exterior practices of this devotion with the thirty-three day preparation for consecration.<sup>167</sup> I have included the consecration within the interior practices, since it is a key element to living *through* Mary.

Montfort goes on to suggest other exterior practices, such as The Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin<sup>168</sup>, which is to be prayed every day of one's life. And then he explains the wearing of Little Chains.<sup>169</sup> Of this practice Montfort says, “It is a very praiseworthy and helpful for those who have become slaves of Jesus in Mary to wear, in token of their slavery of love, a little chain blessed with a special blessing.”<sup>170</sup> He notes that this is not an essential practice and may be dispensed with by those who have made the consecration. But the wearing of a chain is a wonderful reminder that through baptism we

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<sup>164</sup> TD 265

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> TD 227-233

<sup>168</sup> TD 234-235

<sup>169</sup> TD 236-242

<sup>170</sup> TD 236

have been liberated from the chains of sin and death.<sup>171</sup> They also remind us of our vows of baptism and the perfect renewal of these in our consecration to Jesus through Mary. Chains also remind us of our dependence on Christ, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God.<sup>172</sup>

St. Louis exhorts us to honor the Feast of the Incarnation celebrated on March 25, as a principal practice of this devotion. He explains the reason for this honor. That we might honor and imitate the wondrous dependence, which God the Son chose to have on Mary, for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of man. This dependence is revealed especially in this mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his Blessed Mother, depending on her for everything. That we might thank God for the incomparable graces he has conferred upon Mary and especially that of choosing her to be his most worthy Mother. This choice was made in the mystery of the Incarnation. These are the two principle ends of the slavery of Jesus in Mary.<sup>173</sup>

#### *Marian prayers*

Next, Montfort speaks of the Hail Mary and the Rosary. He says that those who want to live in imitation of Christ's filial relationship to Mary should have a great love for the Hail Mary, praying it often and with great confidence. He encourages us not to be content with the Little Crown of the Blessed Virgin, but to pray all fifteen decades of the Rosary every day, if time permits.<sup>174</sup> The Magnificat should be prayed frequently as a way of thanking God for the graces He has given Mary.<sup>175</sup> Montfort concludes his discussion

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<sup>171</sup> TD 237

<sup>172</sup> TD 237-238

<sup>173</sup> TD 243

<sup>174</sup> cf. TD 249-254

<sup>175</sup> TD 255



of the exterior practices of True Devotion by insisting that if we want to live in imitation of Christ and be conformed and united to Him we must practice mortification and self-discipline to root out all sin in our lives. We must shun the allurements of the world and follow the exercises for the contempt of the world given in his work *Love of Eternal Wisdom*.<sup>176</sup>

### **III. The Effects of Practicing *True Devotion***

We will conclude this section of the presentation of True Devotion to Mary with what St. Louis de Montfort calls, “Services of our Lady to her faithful servants.”<sup>177</sup> These are the ways in which Mary loves and cares for all those who give themselves to her unreservedly, that she may lead them to a deeper union and conformity with Jesus Christ.

#### **A. Mary’s love and care for those who practice a true devotion**

Mary loves those who give themselves to her. “She loves them tenderly, more tenderly than all the mothers in the world together. Take the maternal love of all the mothers of the world for their children. Pour all that love into the heart of one mother for an only child. That mother’s love would certainly be immense. Yet Mary’s love for each of her children has more tenderness than the love of that mother for her child.”<sup>178</sup> Mary’s love for her children is active and productive of good in their lives and in the development of their souls.<sup>179</sup> Montfort says,

Mary looks out for favorable opportunities to promote our interests, to enoble and enrich them. She sees clearly in God all that is good and all that is evil; fortunate and unfortunate events; the blessings and condemnations of God. She arranges things in advance so as to divert evils from her servants and put them in the way of abundant blessings. If there is any special benefit to be gained in God’s sight by

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<sup>176</sup> *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, articles 194-200, in God Alone.

<sup>177</sup> TD 201 - 212

<sup>178</sup> TD 202

<sup>179</sup> TD 202

the faithful discharge of an important work, Mary will certainly obtain this opportunity for a beloved child and servant and at the same time, give him the grace to persevere in it to the end. She personally manages all our affairs.<sup>180</sup>

**B. Mary provides for all our needs**

Mary provides for all our needs of body and soul. She especially disposes her children to receive the fullness of the grace of her Son Jesus in the Eucharist so that we may bear with ease the yoke of Christ.<sup>181</sup>

She also nourishes them with the most delicious food from the banquet table of God. She gives them the Son she has borne, the Bread of Life, to be their food, “Dear children,” she says, in the words of Divine Wisdom, “take your fill of my fruits,” that is to say, of the Fruit of Life, Jesus, “whom I brought forth into the world for you.” “Come,” she repeats in another passage, “eat the bread which is Jesus. Drink the wine of his love which I have mixed for you with the milk of my breasts.”

As Mary is the treasurer and dispenser of the gifts and graces of the Most High God, she reserves a choice portion, indeed the choicest portion, to nourish and sustain her children and servants. They grow strong on the Bread of Life; they are made joyful with the wine that brings forth virgins. They are carried at her breast. They bear with ease the yoke of Christ scarcely feeling its weight because of the oil of devotion with which she has softened its wood.<sup>182</sup>

**C. Mary leads and guides by her intercession**

Once we have given ourselves, body and soul, to Jesus through Mary, and everything that pertains to our lives, Mary intercedes for us. She disposes and inspires her children to observe whatever Jesus has taught by word and example that they may be conformed and united to Him.<sup>183</sup>

Mary, Star of the sea, guides all her faithful servants into safe harbor. She shows them the path to eternal life and helps them avoid dangerous pitfalls. She leads them along the path of holiness, steadies them when they are liable to fall, and helps them rise when they have fallen. She chides them as a loving mother when

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<sup>180</sup> TD 203

<sup>181</sup> TD 208

<sup>182</sup> TD 208

<sup>183</sup> Cf. TD 204-206, 209

they are remiss and sometimes even lovingly chastises them. How could a child that follows such a mother and such an enlightened guide as Mary take the wrong path to heaven? Following her you cannot go wrong, says St. Bernard. There is no danger of a true child of Mary being led astray by the devil and falling into heresy. Where Mary leads, Satan with his deceptions and heretics with their subtleties are not encountered. When she upholds you, you will not fall.<sup>184</sup>

#### **D. Mary defends and protects**

Mary defends and protects her children against all their enemies by the way she directs and counsels them, by interceding on their behalf, and by sending her angels and saints as Queen of heaven to help them.

Mary, beloved Mother of chosen souls, shelters them under her protecting wings as a hen does her chicks. She speaks to them, coming down to their level and accommodating herself to all their weaknesses. To ensure their safety from the hawk or vulture, she becomes their escort, surrounding them as an army in battle array. Could anyone surrounded by a well-ordered army of, say, a hundred thousand men fear his enemies? No, and still less would a faithful servant of Mary, protected on all sides by her imperial forces, fear his enemy. This powerful Queen of heaven would sooner dispatch millions of angels to help one of her servants than have it said that a single faithful and trusting servant of hers had fallen victim to the malice, number and power of his enemies.<sup>185</sup>

#### **Conclusion**

St. Louis de Montfort bases his devotion on the divine economy. God has willed to work according to a specific plan in order to save mankind. That plan is the Incarnation in which Jesus entrusted Himself totally to Mary to depend on her as a child depends upon his mother. Mary cooperated with God to give human life to Jesus and then she educated and formed Him as He grew to maturity. Mary also cooperated with Jesus at the Cross to give the life of grace to humanity dead in sin. For this reason Mary is not only the mother of Christ but also our mother in the order of grace. Once we receive the life of

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<sup>184</sup> TD 209

<sup>185</sup> TD 210

grace, the life of Jesus in baptism, Mary cooperates with God to educate and form the faithful in His image through her maternal intercession. Through this maternal role she disposes and inspires the faithful to do her Son's will in love, thus conforming the Christian completely to Christ.

Montfort demonstrates that the most effective means of conformity to Jesus Christ is to entrust oneself totally to Mary, the mold of God, in imitation of Christ in the Incarnation. Then relying not on our own skill but on the perfection of the mold and the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be completely conformed to Christ through faithfully living out the practices of this devotion.

Though Montfort is a disciple of Berulle and the French School of spirituality, there is a distinct difference in the forms used to express servitude to Jesus and Mary. In Bérulle, the gift of self was made to Jesus and then a gift of self was made to Mary as her slave. This form leaves open the question of whether it is permissible to give oneself to another creature in this fashion. A. Bossard saw that the form used by Montfort, "to Jesus through the hands of Mary," was a development, which closed the door to possible confusion. "The consecration recommended by Montfort involves only one movement towards Christ ... But the movement implies two distinct relationships: one with Mary, the 'perfect means' and the other with Christ, 'our ultimate end.'"<sup>186</sup> In this way Montfort corrected the expression "slavery to Mary" or "consecration to Mary" popular in the Confraternities of Holy Slavery with his expression "to Jesus through the hands of Mary" thus relating the gift of self directly to Christ. Fr. Theodore Koehler, in an article on Holy

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<sup>186</sup> A. Bossard, *To Consecrate Oneself to Mary*, in Cahiers marials 28, no 137, 1983, 101-102, translated by Koehler, Fr. Theodore, *Holy Slavery of Love, Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bay Shore, NY, 1994, p. 1163, footnote 27.

Slavery says, "Whereas his predecessors, Sister Ines-Bautista, Los Rios, Fenicki, Boudan, etc., commonly said "*the slavery of the Mother of God*," Montfort prefers the expression "*slavery of Jesus in Mary*" or "*consecration to Jesus through Mary as slaves of love*."<sup>187</sup>

During the French Revolution *True Devotion* was buried for safety with other books and documents in a field at Saint-Laurent-sur-Sevre, and there it remained hidden and forgotten for 127 years until it was found in 1842. Amazingly, Montfort prophesied this event: "I clearly foresee that raging beasts will come in fury to tear to pieces with their diabolical teeth this little book and the one the Holy Spirit made use of to write it, or they will cause it at least to lie hidden in the darkness and silence of a chest and so prevent it from seeing the light of day."<sup>188</sup> Since the time of the finding of *True Devotion*, Montfort's influence has been widespread. Yet, it could be argued that the most important contemporary writer, spiritual leader and proponent of devotion to Mary who has been influenced by Montfort, is Pope John Paul II.

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<sup>187</sup> Koehler, Fr. Theodore, *Holy Slavery of Love, Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bay Shore, NY, 1994, p. 1163, footnote 25.

<sup>188</sup> TD 114

## Chapter Three: John Paul II

One of the most striking aspects of Pope John Paul II is his great devotion to the Mother of God and his deep conviction that she is has been given a very important role in the economy of salvation. Anyone familiar with John Paul will recognize his papal coat of arms, consisting of a cross, just enough off center to make room for the initial “M”, symbolizing Mary standing at the foot of the Cross. Also familiar is his motto, “Totus Tuus,” an abbreviated version of the short formula of total entrustment to Jesus through the hands of Mary written by St. Louis de Montfort: “I am all yours and all that is mine is yours, O dear Jesus, through Mary, your holy Mother.”<sup>189</sup>

As Fr. Eamon Carroll said in his wonderful introduction to John Paul’s series of Marian Catechesis, the Pope will be remembered for so many great things that it would take pages simply to inventory them, yet his pontificate has been marked strongly by a Marian Character and he has given the Church and the world a number of significant teachings concerning our Blessed Mother. Like all great thinkers, Pope John Paul II has drawn from many sources in forming his insightful contributions to the body of Marian thought. A number of influences can be discerned in his theology and devotion to Mary. Growing up in Poland he was immersed in that country’s steadfast devotion to her. He analyzed the Second Vatican Council’s statement concerning Mary’s role in the life of Christ and the Church presented in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*. His personalist philosophy and his own Marian theology are integral to his interest in devotion to her.

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<sup>189</sup> TD 233

Yet, of the various influences, John Paul himself highlights that of St. Louis de Montfort.<sup>190</sup>

In the two sections that follow I will examine the history of John Paul's familiarity and agreement with the thought of St. Louis de Montfort and present his own developments as they are expressed in *Redemptoris Mater*. Though John Paul II has written, taught and preached about Mary for the better part of his life, this study will be limited to his presentation of Mary in *Redemptoris Mater*, because this encyclical is a synthesis of his Marian thought. I will periodically refer to his series of seventy general audiences dedicated to Mary, given from 1995-1997, entitled, *Theotokos, Woman, Mother, Disciple*, as these talks represent an important compendium of the Holy Father's thought concerning Mary.<sup>191</sup> Finally, I will discuss some of the many points of convergence and the few apparent differences between the Marian theology and devotion of John Paul II and that of St. Louis de Montfort. Because of Montfort's influence on the Pope there are many points of similarity between the two on the topic of Mary. These have been duly commented on in a number of excellent studies cited below.<sup>192</sup>

## **I. The Influence of St. Louis de Montfort**

During the Second World War, John Paul worked as a laborer in a chemical factory while he studied clandestinely for the priesthood to avoid the Nazi authorities. It was at this time that he was introduced to Montfort's work, *True Devotion to Mary*. At

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<sup>190</sup> For a more detailed look at these influences see Edward O'Connor, *The Roots of Pope John Paul II's Devotion to Mary*, in *Marian Studies* 39, 1988, p. 78-114.

<sup>191</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos, Woman, Mother, Disciple, A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, MA, 2000.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Bossard, Alphonse, S.M.M., *L'encyclique "Redemptoris Mater" et saint Louis Marie de Montfort*, *Marianum* LI, 1989, p. 261-268; R. Laurentin, *A Year of Grace with Mary*, Veritas Publ. 1987, p. 111-140, 148-161; Edward O'Connor, *The Roots of Pope John Paul II's Devotion to Mary*, in *Marian Studies* 39, 1988, p. 78-114.

first he was afraid that devotion to Mary would distance him from Jesus and for this reason he felt he should lessen the attention he gave to Mary in order to focus more on Christ. He took *True Devotion* to work with him at the factory and read it during breaks. In fact, his copy is still stained by the chemicals from that factory. Through reading *True Devotion* he came to the conclusion that devotion to Mary would never distract him from Christ, on the contrary, it would be the most effective means to a life of deep union with Him. On this point John Paul says:

The reading of the treatise of the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin was the turning point in my life. Whereas I had initially been afraid lest devotion to Mary might detract from that due to Jesus instead of giving him his rightful place, I realized, when reading the treatise on True Devotion, that such was not the case. Our interior relationship with the mother of God is a result of our association with the mystery of Christ.<sup>193</sup>

In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, the Pope states,

Thanks to St. Louis of Montfort, I came to understand that true devotion to the Mother of God is actually Christocentric, indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.<sup>194</sup>

Immersed in these Marian influences John Paul II has written and preached almost continuously throughout his pastoral career on the role that God has given Mary in the life of Christ and the Church. He teaches that it is in and through Mary's maternal help that the faithful are conformed and united to Jesus Christ. In his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul explains Mary's active presence and role in human history, which leads him to exhort all Christians to entrust themselves to her maternal care.

John Paul II proclaimed 1987 / 88 a year especially dedicated to Mary and in that

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<sup>193</sup> Frossard, Andre, *Be Not Afraid*, St. Martins Press, New York, NY, 1984, p. 184.

<sup>194</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Knoph Publ. New York, 1994.



same year he gave the world the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*. Many people wanted to know why he proclaimed the Marian Year and asked why we needed a new encyclical on Mary. Was there something new in this encyclical? Was he going to propose a new dogma or a new feast? Was he going to say more than the Second Vatican Council or was it to be a commentary on what the council had to say concerning Mary? In article 48 of *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul gives his reasons for the Marian Year and his specific intentions for writing *Redemptoris Mater*:

It is precisely the special bond between humanity and this Mother which has led me to proclaim a Marian Year in the Church, in this period before the end of the Second Millenium since Christ's birth.

He goes on to say,

Now, following the line of the Second Vatican Council, I wish to emphasize the *special presence* of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and his Church. For this is a fundamental dimension emerging from the Mariology of the Council, the end of which is now more than twenty years behind us. The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in 1985 exhorted everyone to follow faithfully the teaching and guidelines of the Council. We can say that these two events - the Council and the synod - embody what the Holy Spirit himself wishes 'to say to the Church' in the present phase of history.<sup>195</sup>

He states quite clearly that the reason for calling the Marian Year and writing the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* was to call attention to the most important truths that emerged from the Council concerning Mary since the Council embodies precisely what the Holy Spirit wanted to say to the world today, namely, the special bond God has established between the human race and Mary as our mother and to highlight her "*special presence*" in the Church.

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<sup>195</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, MA, 1987, article 48. Hereafter cited as "RM". All citations will be by article rather than by page number.

According to the Pope, *Redemptoris Mater* was also devoted to helping the faithful to understand and live an authentic Marian Spirituality, seen in the light of Tradition, to which the Second Vatican Council exhorts us.<sup>196</sup> He notes that there are many rich sources of Marian spirituality in the various Christian communities of the past and many new manifestations of this spirituality today. Yet, he recalls specifically St. Louis de Montfort, “who proposes consecration to Christ through the hands of Mary, as an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their baptismal commitments.”<sup>197</sup>

John Paul explains that just as Mary preceded the entry of Jesus Christ into human history and just as she was present at the beginning of the Church on the day of Pentecost, likewise, she continues to precede the Church in her journey through human history. “She is the one who, precisely as the ‘handmaid of the Lord,’ cooperates unceasingly with the work of salvation accomplished by Christ, her Son.”<sup>198</sup> In light of this active presence of Mary, we are not only to recall the past “that testifies to the special maternal cooperation of the Mother of God in the work of salvation in Christ the Lord,” we are also to “prepare for the future the paths of this (Mary’s) cooperation. For the end of the Second Christian Millennium opens up as a new prospect.”<sup>199</sup>

## II. A Presentation of *Redemptoris Mater*

*Redemptoris Mater* is divided into three main parts. It begins with Mary's role in the mystery of Christ, it continues in the second part by addressing her active role in the life of the Church. This leads to the conclusion in the third part that the faithful are called

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<sup>196</sup> RM 48

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> RM 49

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

to live an authentic Marian spirituality. John Paul highlights that her maternal presence and role in the saving plan of God is of particular significance at the dawn of our new millenium.

With good reason, then, at the end of this millenium, we Christians who know that the providential plan of the Most Holy Trinity is the central reality of Revelation and of faith feel the need to emphasize the unique presence of the Mother of Christ in history, especially during these last years leading up to the year 2000.<sup>200</sup>

This presentation will follow the organization of *Redemptoris Mater*, beginning as John Paul does, with the presence and role of Mary in the mystery of Christ. Part two considers the implications of Mary's presence in the life of the pilgrim Church. Part three concludes with a discussion of John Paul's vision for an authentic Marian spirituality based upon her maternal cooperation in the work of salvation. There are a number of important commentaries on *Redemptoris Mater*, a few of which are cited below.<sup>201</sup>

#### **A. Mary's role in the Mystery of Christ**

According to the Pope, there are two key passages in the New Testament that reveal an essential truth about Mary. The first is from the annunciation, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you."<sup>202</sup> The second from the visitation, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."<sup>203</sup> John Paul says this second passage is of "*fundamental importance*"<sup>204</sup> when it is linked with the first and together they reveal an essential Mariological truth: Mary has become

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<sup>200</sup> RM 3

<sup>201</sup> Fr. Frederick Jelly O.P., *Ecumenical Aspects of Redemptoris Mater*, in *Marian Studies*, Dayton, OH., Vol. 39, 1988, p. 115-129; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: God's Yes to Man*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988; Fr. Laurentin, *A Year of Grace with Mary*, Veritas, Dublin, 1987, p. 148-161.

<sup>202</sup> Luke 1:28

<sup>203</sup> Luke 1:45

<sup>204</sup> RM 13

"really present in the mystery of Christ precisely because she 'has believed.'"<sup>205</sup> In order to understand what the Pope is saying here we must have a clear understanding of the virtue of faith.

The Church teaches that, by His Revelation, the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company. The adequate response to this invitation is faith.<sup>206</sup> "By faith, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God, the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, 'the obedience of faith.'<sup>207</sup> By faith we respond with our whole being to God's invitation to communion with Him. This response includes not only the assent of the intellect to what he has revealed, but also requires the abandonment of the will, it requires a total gift of self to God.<sup>208</sup>

Though faith is the human response to God, God is always the first one to act. Article 8 of *Redemptoris Mater* points out that the way in which the angel Gabriel greeted Mary in the Annunciation bears witness to God's initiative in her life. When Gabriel greets Mary, he does not call her by her usual name, but by a new name given by God: "full of grace." The Greek word used for this "new name" is *Kecharitomene*, which has as its root the word *charitoo*. Paul uses the word *charitoo* in Ephesians 1:6-7, to describe the grace that God has bestowed upon the faithful that brings the forgiveness of sin and makes them adoptive children of the Father. The Apostle Peter speaks of *charitoo*, of

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<sup>205</sup> RM 12

<sup>206</sup> CCC 142

<sup>207</sup> CCC 143, cf. Romans 1:5; 16:26.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. CCC 26 and 176.

grace, when he reminds his listeners that the Father has promised mankind it will escape the corruption in the world by becoming a "partaker of the divine nature."<sup>209</sup> That promise is fulfilled by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, and the life he gives is the life of grace that makes us children of the Father. John Paul states that by greeting Mary as "full of grace" the angel Gabriel bears witness to the truth that Mary was given this gift of God Himself, from the first moment of her existence.<sup>210</sup> Through this we see that it is God who acts first in the life of Mary by giving her the gift of His Spirit and the fullness of grace. How does she respond to His gift?

### 1. **Mary perfectly exemplifies the virtue of faith**

In the second text, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord"<sup>211</sup> Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, bears witness to the fact that Mary responded to this gift of God *by faith*.<sup>212</sup> Faith is "an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God," thus, Mary's response constitutes the perfect realization of this virtue. "Indeed," John Paul says, "at the Annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the 'full submission of intellect and will,' manifesting the 'obedience of faith' to him who spoke to her through his messenger. She responds, therefore, with all her human and feminine 'I'."<sup>213</sup>

At the Annunciation Mary received God's promise and His invitation: "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

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<sup>209</sup> 2 Peter 1:4

<sup>210</sup> Cf. RM 9

<sup>211</sup> Luke 1:45

<sup>212</sup> Cf. RM 12

<sup>213</sup> RM 13

throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."<sup>214</sup> And, "The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."<sup>215</sup> To this Gift of God and to His amazing promises, Mary replied, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."<sup>216</sup> John Paul says, "Mary uttered this fiat in *faith*. In faith she entrusted herself to God without reserve and devoted herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son."<sup>217</sup> By this faith, by this total gift of self, Mary was united to the Person and work of Christ as His "associate of unique nobility"<sup>218</sup>.

## 2. Mary has a unique role in the mission of Christ

In Article 39 John Paul gives the key to answer the question of how Mary became present in the mystery of Christ not only as the "nursing mother" of the Son of Man but also as the associate of the Messiah and Redeemer. He emphasizes that Mary's unique role in the mission of Christ is a result of her faith, that is, her total gift of self to God and to all of his saving plans. This total gift of self was given first in virginity and then through Motherhood.<sup>219</sup> John Paul states,

It can be said that this *consent to motherhood* is above all a *result of her total self-giving to God in virginity*. Mary accepted her election as Mother of the Son of God, guided by spousal love, the love which totally 'consecrates' a human being to God. By virtue of this love, Mary wished to be always and in all things 'given to God,' living in virginity. The words, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord' express the fact that from the outset she accepted and understood her own motherhood as a total *gift of self*, a gift of her person to the service of the saving plans of the Most High. And to the very end she lived her entire maternal sharing in the life of Jesus Christ, her Son, in a way that matched her vocation to

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<sup>214</sup> Luke 1:31-35

<sup>215</sup> Luke 1:30-35

<sup>216</sup> Luke 1:37-38

<sup>217</sup> RM 13, Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 56.

<sup>218</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 61

<sup>219</sup> RM 39

virginity... Mary perfectly unites in herself the love proper to virginity and the love characteristic of motherhood, which are joined and, as it were, fused together. For this reason Mary became not only the 'nursing mother' of the Son of Man but also the 'associate of unique nobility' of the Messiah and Redeemer.<sup>220</sup>

Though *Redemptoris Mater* does not state explicitly that Mary had taken a vow of virginity preceding her consent to motherhood, John Paul teaches that Mary intended to remain a virgin always. In his *Catechesis on Mary*, the Pope says she questioned the angel who told her of Jesus' conception and birth not because of a lack of belief, as it was in the case of Zechariah, but because "by a voluntary choice she intended to remain a virgin."<sup>221</sup>

Therefore, Mary's motherhood is entirely unique because it flows directly from her total gift of self to God first in virginity. By bringing this attitude of virginity, that is, a spousal love for God, to bear on her consent to motherhood she accepted and understood her role not simply as that of a physical mother. She gave a total gift of her person to His entire redeeming mission. By virtue of her virginity Mary gave herself without reserve, as the handmaid of the Lord, to every aspect of the divine plan of redemption. This plan included restoring the life of grace to all mankind and to bring that life of Christ to full maturity in their souls.<sup>222</sup>

### **3. Mary is perfectly united with Christ in His self-emptying**

By faith, that is, by her total gift of self, Mary was definitively introduced into the mystery of Christ. This union between Mary and Jesus continued to the Cross, where she stood united with her Son in His redemptive suffering. We may fail to see the significance of Mary standing by the

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid. 39

<sup>221</sup> John Paul II, in a general audience given July 24, 1996 entitled, *Our Lady Intended to Remain a Virgin*, as found in *Theotokos: Woman, Mother, Disciple: A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, Pauline Books and Media, Boston, 2000, p. 116.

Cross of Jesus, but John Paul offers a profound insight to this event. At the Cross, Mary was called to abandon herself entirely to the will of the Father, she was called to empty herself even of the promise she had received from Him at the Annunciation. In this way she would be united in the total self-emptying, the “kenosis” of her Son. John Paul says,

And now, standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary is the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of these words. On that wood of the Cross, her Son hangs in agony as one condemned. 'He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows...he was despised, and we esteemed him not': as one destroyed (Isaiah 53:3-5). How great, how heroic then is the *obedience of faith* shown by Mary in the face of God's 'unsearchable judgments'! How completely she 'abandons herself to God' without reserve, 'offering the full assent of the intellect and will' to Him whose ways are inscrutable. ...Through this faith Mary is perfectly united with Christ in His self-emptying.<sup>223</sup>

How could Mary have abandoned herself to God more than by receiving the promise of her Son's eternal reign, only then to see Him brutally murdered and dead upon a cross? How could she have emptied herself in trust more than this? Yet, it is precisely in this abandonment to the will of God that Mary is united to the self-emptying of Christ upon the Cross. Just as Mary united her will to the will of Christ at the time of His entrance into the world, at the Cross Mary united her self-emptying to the self-emptying of Jesus in order to give life to the world. The Apostle Paul reminds us,

Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to cling to, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him...<sup>224</sup>

John Paul continues, "At the foot of the Cross Mary shares through faith in the shocking mystery of this self-emptying. This is perhaps the deepest 'kenosis' of faith in

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<sup>222</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 56.

<sup>223</sup> RM 18

<sup>224</sup> Philippians 2:5-8



human history. Through faith the Mother shares in the death of her Son, in His redeeming death; but in contrast with the faith of the disciples who fled...<sup>1225</sup> It must be explained that this kenosis of faith is a spiritual emptying, a sharing in the suffering of Christ through her maternal compassion and not a physical emptying to the point of physical destruction and death as it was in Christ. Through virginity and motherhood Mary gave a total gift of self to her Son and to His redemptive mission. This gift of self reached its perfection at the Cross when her complete self-emptying was united to that of her Son. In this way "Mary is definitively introduced into the mystery of Christ."<sup>1226</sup>

#### **B. Mary's Role in the Mystery of the Church**

The self-emptying love of Christ poured out from the Cross is the source of the world's salvation. Yet, at the Cross He is not alone. Mary persevered in union with Him, where she stood united perfectly to His self-emptying. At the Cross Mary united her love to the redemptive love of Jesus poured out for the life of the world. Therefore, the life of grace that flows from the Cross is the fruit of two loves: it is a union between the all-sufficient redemptive love of Jesus and the maternal love of Mary. In this way Mary cooperated with Christ to give supernatural life to mankind, the same Life we receive in Baptism and in all the sacraments. Just as a woman cooperates with God to give natural life to a child and becomes a mother in the order of nature, likewise, at the Cross, Mary cooperated with God to give the divine life to all mankind. For this reason she has become our mother in the order of grace. In a general audience of September 17, 1997, John Paul stated:

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<sup>225</sup> RM 18

<sup>226</sup> RM 8

On Calvary, Mary united herself to the sacrifice of her Son and made her own maternal contribution to the work of salvation, which took the form of labor pains, the birth of the new humanity. In addressing the words “Woman, behold your son” to Mary, the crucified one proclaimed her motherhood not only in relation to the Apostle John but also to every disciple. The evangelist himself, by saying that Jesus had to die “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (Jn 11:52), indicates the Church’s birth as the fruit of the redemptive sacrifice with which Mary is maternally associated.<sup>227</sup>

In another of these Marian Catechesis, given April 9, 1997, John Paul says, “She alone was associated in this way with the redemptive sacrifice that merited the salvation of all mankind. In union with Christ and in submission to him, she collaborated in obtaining the grace of salvation for all humanity.”<sup>228</sup>

John Paul says that a new relationship began at the Cross, a spiritual motherhood between Mary and the Church. “And so this ‘new motherhood of Mary’ generated by faith, is *the fruit of the ‘new’ love* which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son.”<sup>229</sup> In this way Mary became *present* in the mystery of the Church as our Mother.

### **1. John 19:25-27 “Behold your Mother.”**

John Paul says Mary’s motherhood of the human race is clearly stated and established at the Cross.<sup>230</sup> In the Gospel of John we read,

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother: “Woman, Behold your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple, A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, p 234.

<sup>228</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple, A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, p 186.

<sup>229</sup> RM 23

<sup>230</sup> RM 23

<sup>231</sup> John 19: 25-27

"Behold, thy mother." These are among the last words of the dying Christ. It is not as though our Savior in His last moments of consciousness before death regained His composure and realized there would be no one to care for His mother after His death. John Paul states, "In departing from Nazareth to start his public life, Jesus had already left his Mother alone. Moreover, the presence at the cross of her relative, Mary of Clopas, allows us to suppose that the Blessed Virgin was on good terms with her family and relatives, who could have welcomed her after her Son's death."<sup>232</sup> It is critical to understand Jesus' words within the context of His universal saving mission. At the foot of the Cross, John represents all disciples destined to receive the gift of divine grace. Mary, "the Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery - a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity - is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind."<sup>233</sup> Jesus Christ proclaimed a statement of fact, not an invitation. He did not passively invite us to accept Mary as our mother, rather, He stated a divine truth, "Behold your mother." John Paul goes on to say, "the words uttered by Jesus from the Cross signify that *the motherhood* of her who bore Christ finds a 'new' continuation *in the Church and through the Church*, symbolized and represented by John."<sup>234</sup>

## 2. Filial entrustment

From the Cross Christ entrusted all people to Mary, in the representative of the beloved disciple with the words, "Behold your mother...Woman behold your son." John Paul says of these words:

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<sup>232</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple*, given in a general audience on April 23, 1997, p. 189.

<sup>233</sup> RM 23

<sup>234</sup> RM 24

They are words which determine *Mary's place in the life of Christ's disciples* and they express - as I have already said - the new motherhood of the Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood, born from the heart of the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer of the world. It is a motherhood in the order of grace, for it implores the gift of the Spirit, who raises up the new children of God, redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ: that Spirit whom Mary too, together with the Church, received on the day of Pentecost.<sup>235</sup>

John Paul goes on to say that these words of Christ "fully show the reason *for the Marian dimension of the life of Christ's disciples*."<sup>236</sup> These words were not just for Mary and John, they were for all Christians and for all time.

The Redeemer entrusts his mother to the disciple, and at the same time he gives her to him as his mother. Mary's motherhood, which becomes man's inheritance, is a gift: *a gift which Christ himself makes* personally to every individual. The Redeemer entrusts Mary to John because he entrusts John to Mary. At the foot of the Cross there begins that special *entrusting of humanity to the Mother of Christ*, which in the history of the Church has been expressed and practiced in different ways.<sup>237</sup>

Reflecting on the words of John 19:27 "from that hour John took Mary to his own home" John Paul concludes that John received and embraced Mary as his mother personally. He says that to take Mary "to his own home" indicates "everything expressed by the intimate relationship of a child with its mother." In *Redemptoris Mater* 45, John Paul says that the best word to describe this personal relationship established by Jesus between Mary and John and consequently between Mary and the rest of humanity is the word "entrusting." By entrusting oneself to Mary as her child, the Christian, like John, invites Mary "into his own home" or as John Paul describes it, "into his human and Christian 'I'."<sup>238</sup> In this way the Christian desires to be taken into Mary's "maternal charity" with which she cares for her children by cooperating with God in their birth and

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<sup>235</sup> RM 44

<sup>236</sup> RM 45

<sup>237</sup> RM 45

development in the likeness of Christ.<sup>239</sup> He wants us to understand that "entrustment" is a response specifically to *the love of a mother*.<sup>240</sup> John Paul continues by teaching that the Marian dimension of the life of a Christian is expressed "precisely through this filial entrusting to the mother of Christ."<sup>241</sup>

Mary was present in the life of Jesus as His mother. John Paul says, "In the Church she continues to be a maternal presence."<sup>242</sup>She continues to be present in the Church as our Mother so that she may care for the brothers and sisters of her Son Jesus just as she cared for Him during his life upon earth. John Paul describes this active maternal presence of Mary in the life of Christ and the Church as her "maternal mediation."

### **C. Authentic Marian Spirituality**

#### **1. Mediation in Christ**

In Part three of *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul explains how we are to understand and live out the full truth of Mary's maternal role in the life of the Church, that is, her "maternal mediation." He begins by making an important theological distinction and ecumenical point. 1 Timothy 2:5-6, says there is only one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Mary is not equal to Christ in the work of redemption. By her maternal role she shares in His saving work in a subordinate and dependent manner. The Pope calls Mary's maternal cooperation a mediation within the one mediation of Christ.<sup>243</sup> The Second Vatican Council presented this truth of Mary's mediation as a sharing in the

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> RM 45

<sup>241</sup> RM 45

<sup>242</sup> RM 24

one unique source that is the mediation of Christ Himself.<sup>244</sup> In fact, the Church teaches that her maternal role in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows forth its power. Here the Pope quotes *Lumen Gentium*, chapter eight:

All the saving influences of the Blessed Virgin Mary on mankind originate, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. They flow forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rest on his mediation, depend entirely on it, and draw all their power from it. In no way do they impede the immediate union of the faithful with Christ. Rather they foster this union.<sup>245</sup>

Once he establishes the way in which Mary's mediation relates to that of Christ, John Paul goes on to answer the question of why Mary has a saving role in the life of the Church. First, as we have already shown, Mary gave a total gift of her person to God and to His entire redeeming mission through her commitment to virginity and then through her consent to motherhood. By virtue of her virginity Mary gave herself without reserve, as the handmaid of the Lord, to every aspect of the divine plan of redemption. Second, Mary's maternal role in the Church is a continuation of her motherhood of the Son of God, this we demonstrated by showing the way in which Jesus entrusted John to Mary at the Cross.<sup>246</sup> From this we begin to understand more fully the way in which Mary cooperated as a mother with the Savior's whole mission through her actions and sufferings. It was through her fiat that the Savior entered human history. She was the one who conceived Jesus in her womb, gave Him birth, nursed Him and educated Him as He grew. She cared for and protected Him as Herod sought His life. She was present at Cana, the beginning of the public ministry of Christ, as a mother and at her intercession He performed His first public miracle that strengthened the faith of the Apostles. Along this path of collaboration Mary's

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<sup>243</sup> RM 38

<sup>244</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 62

<sup>245</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 60

motherhood underwent a transformation as she grew in burning love toward all those to whom her Son's mission was directed. This love culminated at the foot of the Cross, where Mary, wholly united with her Son, poured out her maternal love in union with the redemptive love of Christ in order to restore the life of grace to souls. By this cooperation with the Redeemer, Mary entered in a way all her own into the one mediation of Christ, as the Mother of those He sought to redeem.<sup>247</sup> The Pope says that Jesus bears testimony to this "new motherhood" of Mary:

The words uttered by Jesus from the Cross signify that *the motherhood* of her who bore Christ finds a "new" continuation *in the Church and through the Church*, symbolized and represented by John... 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.<sup>248</sup>

The redemptive mission of Christ included not only his saving death on the Cross but also His restoration of the life of grace to all people through the Church and the sacraments as well as the maturation of that new life in them as they grow in holiness. John Paul points out that after the Resurrection and Ascension, Mary continued her maternal role in Christ's saving work of bringing to birth and development the divine life within souls, and she did so as the Mother of the Church.

*She was also the "handmaid of the Lord," left by her Son as Mother in the midst of the infant Church: "Behold your mother." Thus there began to develop a special bond between this Mother and the Church. For the infant Church was the fruit of the Cross and Resurrection of her Son. 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.*<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> RM 24

<sup>247</sup> RM 39

<sup>248</sup> RM 24

<sup>249</sup> RM 40

At the end of her life she was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory where she was exalted by the Lord as Queen of the Universe in order that she might be more perfectly conformed to Christ. Though she has been taken up into heaven and united to her Son by a close and indissoluble bond, she is not distant from her children who still journey upon earth surrounded by the dangers and difficulties of life. John Paul says,

Mary's motherhood remains in the Church as a maternal mediation: interceding for all her children, the Mother cooperates in the saving work of her Son, the Redeemer of the world. In fact...the Motherhood of Mary in the order of grace ... will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving role, but by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation.<sup>250</sup>

The Pope teaches that in this way Mary's motherhood will continue unceasingly in the Church "as a mediation which intercedes."<sup>251</sup>

## **2. Cana outlines the maternal role of Mary**

The Pope teaches that the Wedding of Cana, understood with the mind of the Church, gives the best illustration of the way to understand Mary's maternal mediation. In this familiar story St. John the Evangelist tells us that the mother of Jesus was invited to a wedding at Cana. In one of his Marian Catechesis the Pope suggests that the reason Jesus was invited to the wedding was because of Mary's presence. He notes that it is only after John mentions the presence of Mary at the wedding that the Evangelist adds, "Jesus also was invited to the marriage."<sup>252</sup> John Paul goes on to make an astounding point in regard

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<sup>250</sup> RM 40

<sup>251</sup> RM 40

<sup>252</sup> John 2:2



to her mediation, "With these remarks, John seems to indicate that at Cana, as in the fundamental event of the Incarnation, it was Mary who introduced the Savior."<sup>253</sup>

St. John tells us that the disciples of Jesus are also invited to this ordinary wedding with an ordinary bride and groom, in which something extraordinary takes place. The wine runs out. This meant instant social embarrassment to the couple and an end to their celebration. What takes place instead is both profound and beautiful. Mary presents the need of the couple to Jesus, interceding or asking for His help. Then Mary tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Jesus makes His will known to the servants and they do it by filling the jars with water. By changing the water into wine Jesus manifests his glory, He liberates the couple from the great social embarrassment, and the faith of the disciples is greatly increased. In this way John Paul says, "the episode of Cana in Galilee offers a sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power."<sup>254</sup> Cana, John Paul says, "quite clearly outlines the new dimension, the new meaning of Mary's motherhood... A new kind of motherhood according to the Spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say *Mary's solicitude for human beings*, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs."<sup>255</sup>

This mediation consists in essentially three things. One, Mary brings the needs of the human family within the "radius"<sup>256</sup> of Christ's messianic mission and salvific power

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<sup>253</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple*, given in a general audience on February 26, 1997, p. 173.

<sup>254</sup> RM 22

<sup>255</sup> RM 21

<sup>256</sup> RM 21

"in her position as a mother."<sup>257</sup> She does this by interceding for mankind.<sup>258</sup> Two, as a mother "she also *wishes the messianic power of her Son to be manifested*, that salvific power of his which is meant to help man in his misfortunes, to free him from the evil which in various forms and degrees weighs heavily upon his life."<sup>259</sup> And three, "The Mother of Christ presents herself as the *spokeswoman of her Son's will*, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested."<sup>260</sup> Cana illustrates the specifically maternal nature of Mary's mediation, that is, her maternal cooperation in the saving work of Christ. It also shows that her mediation is entirely directed toward the bringing of all mankind and each individual within the radius of His saving power.<sup>261</sup>

Though it may seem appropriate here, I have chosen not to elaborate any further on the maternal nature of Mary's mediation since I will cover this at length in chapter four as well as in the theological perspectives of part II of this study.

## **Conclusion to John Paul II**

In article 48 John Paul explains that he has written *Redemptoris Mater* to help the faithful to a more careful reading of what the Second Vatican Council said about Mary's role in the life of Christ and the Church. Based on this he wants us to understand and live an authentic Marian Spirituality, seen in the light of Tradition, to which the Second Vatican Council exhorted the Church.<sup>262</sup> In parts one and two of *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul explains how Mary is definitively introduced into the mystery of Christ by giving a

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<sup>257</sup> RM 21

<sup>258</sup> RM 21

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> RM 22

total gift of self to her Son and to his redeeming mission through virginity and motherhood. Throughout the life of Jesus, Mary cooperated as a mother with the Savior's whole mission through her actions and sufferings. Along this path of collaboration Mary's motherhood underwent a transformation as she grew in love toward all those to whom her Son's mission was directed. This love culminated at the foot of the Cross, where Mary, wholly united with her Son, poured out her maternal love in union with the redemptive love of Christ in order to restore the life of grace to souls. By this cooperation with the Redeemer, Mary entered in a way all her own into the one mediation of Christ as the Mother of those He sought to redeem.<sup>263</sup> Jesus bears testimony to this "new motherhood" of Mary with the words, "Behold your mother." In part three John Paul explains the way in which we are to understand and live out the maternal role of Mary in the life of the Church. Mary continues to care for the brothers and sisters of her Son through her maternal mediation. She intercedes for her children who still journey on earth surrounded by the dangers and difficulties of life. The Church confesses and proclaims this special presence and the maternal care of Mary for all human beings and continually exhorts all mankind to entrust themselves to her as Christ entrusted Himself to her in the Incarnation.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> RM 48

<sup>263</sup> RM 39

<sup>264</sup> RM 39

## **Chapter Four: A Comparison of Thought Between John Paul II and St. Louis de Montfort**

### **Introduction**

There are many points of convergence between St. Louis de Montfort and John Paul II concerning Mary, which should come as no surprise since John Paul readily acknowledges the influence Montfort had on his Mariology. In this section I will highlight two of these points and then two significant points of departure. This will, in turn, enable us to offer one answer, though certainly not the only, to the question, why should one go to Jesus through Mary? Through this comparison we recognize how both authors emphasize Mary's active presence in the life of Christ and the Church as well as the maternal character of her cooperation. John Paul goes on to make a significant contribution to the devotion to Jesus through Mary with his departure from Montfort's use of the term "slavery" to describe the relationship between the believer and Mary. He prefers to describe this relationship in terms of filial love, as a self-entrusting of a child to its mother in order to live out a relationship of total dependence. According to the Pope, this dependence upon Mary not only has its beginning in Christ but is also directed definitively to Him.<sup>265</sup> The second point of departure is seen in the way in which the Pope describes the form of Mary's mediation. He expresses her mediation in terms of a "maternal presence." He describes her mediation as a maternal influence that comes through a unique person-to-person relationship with each Christian rather than portraying her mediation as a distribution of grace. Thus, to see one's relationship with Mary not in

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<sup>265</sup> RM 46

the context of slavery or as a channel of grace but from the perspective of a son's love for the best of all mothers is the key to understanding the Pope's presentation of Mary.

## **I. Significant Points of Convergence**

### **A. Mary's presence**

Both Montfort and John Paul II emphasize the special presence of Mary in the life and redemptive work of Christ and in the lives of the faithful who make up His Mystical Body. Fr. Laurentin notes the significance of this theme for both Montfort and John Paul II in his commentary on *Redemptoris Mater*:

His encyclical is an invitation to rediscover the presence of Mary. I was not familiar with the encyclical when I wrote this book as an invitation to rediscover her presence (cf. subtitle in Chapter 4). This idea came to me not only from Christian tradition and from the position of the Church which too often has forgotten this presence, but from Grignion de Montfort, who inspired the Pope, and from my involvement, over many years, with de Montfort's teaching on the Virgin. Let us rediscover the living presence of Mary our mother: supreme gift of Jesus Christ on Calvary.<sup>266</sup>

In *True Devotion*, Montfort stresses the importance of Mary's presence in God's plan of salvation. It is through her cooperation that God chose, from the time of her creation, to begin and accomplish His greatest works. It will be the same until the end of the world.<sup>267</sup> Montfort says, "The Son of God became man for our salvation but only in Mary and through Mary."<sup>268</sup> Then he goes on to say:

If we examine closely the remainder of the life of Jesus Christ, we see that he chose to begin his miracles through Mary. It was by her word that he sanctified St. John the Baptist in the womb of his mother, St. Elizabeth; no sooner had Mary spoken than John was sanctified... At the wedding in Cana he changed water into wine at her humble prayer... He began and continued his miracles through Mary and he will continue them through her until the end of time.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Fr. R. Laurentin, *A Year of Grace with Mary*, Veritas Publ., Dublin, 1987, p. 158.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. TD 15

<sup>268</sup> TD 16

<sup>269</sup> TD 19

And further,

Even at his death she had to be present so that he might be united with her in one sacrifice and be immolated with her consent to the eternal Father, just as formerly Isaac was offered in sacrifice by Abraham when he accepted the will of God. It was Mary who nursed him, fed him, cared for him, reared him, and sacrificed him for us.<sup>270</sup>

Like Montfort, John Paul II lays great emphasis on the presence of Mary God's work of redemption. In the introduction to *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul says that the primary reason for writing the encyclical was to underscore "the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and her active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church."<sup>271</sup> His desire for the Church is to rediscover the role God has given Mary in His plan of salvation, a saving role, which becomes efficacious through her active presence in the Church and in each person's life. At the end of *Redemptoris Mater* he focuses on this key point saying, "It is precisely the special bond between humanity and this Mother which has led me to proclaim a Marian Year in the Church."<sup>272</sup> He immediately goes on to say, "Now, following the line of the Second Vatican Council, I wish to emphasize the *special presence* of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and his Church. For this is a fundamental dimension emerging from the Mariology of the Council."<sup>273</sup> It is his hope that, once we become convinced of her presence and her role in the history of salvation, we will entrust ourselves to her in imitation of Christ in the Incarnation. Then, by the

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<sup>270</sup> TD 18

<sup>271</sup> RM 1

<sup>272</sup> RM 48

<sup>273</sup> RM 48

power of the Holy Spirit, she may form in us the image of her Son.<sup>274</sup>

## **B. Mary is present as a mother**

It is well known that St. Louis de Montfort uses the term “slavery” when speaking of the total gift of self to Jesus through Mary and that he referred to her as our Queen and the distributor of all her Son’s graces. But, in order to avoid being left with a distorted understanding of this great saint’s view of our relationship with Mary it is important to point out that he certainly emphasized her role as our Mother. Montfort states, "God the Father wishes Mary to be the mother of his children until the end of time and so he says to her: 'Dwell in Jacob,' that is to say, take up your abode permanently in my children."<sup>275</sup> In paragraphs 201-212 of *True Devotion*, he beautifully expresses "the services which the Virgin Mary, as the best of all mothers, lovingly renders to those loyal servants who have given themselves entirely to her."<sup>276</sup> Here he sees in the story of Rebecca's maternal love for Jacob a symbol of Mary's proactive loving presence. On this point he says of Mary:

Here is what this loving Mother does for her children to obtain for them the blessings of their heavenly Father: Like Rebecca she looks out for favorable opportunities to promote their interests, to ennoble and enrich them. She sees clearly in God all that is good and all that is evil; fortunate and unfortunate events; the blessings and condemnations of God. She arranges things in advance so as to divert evils from her servants and put them in the way of abundant blessings. If there is any special benefit to be gained in God's sight by the faithful discharge of an important work, Mary will certainly obtain this opportunity for a beloved child and servant and at the same time, give him the grace to persevere in it to the end. She personally manages our affairs.<sup>277</sup>

Montfort says in another section:

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<sup>274</sup> RM 45

<sup>275</sup> TD 29,30

<sup>276</sup> TD 201

<sup>277</sup> TD 203

It is true that on our way we have hard battles to fight and serious obstacles to overcome, but Mary, our Mother and Queen, stays close to her faithful servants. She is always at hand to brighten their darkness, clear away their doubts, strengthen them in their fears, sustain them in their combats and trials. Truly, in comparison with other ways, this virgin road to Jesus is a path of roses and sweet delights.<sup>278</sup>

Likewise, John Paul II stresses that Mary is specifically present in and for the Church, as well as each individual person, as a mother and that she cares for her children who still journey upon earth with a mother's love and care. Reflecting on the words of Christ from the Cross, "Behold your mother," John Paul states,

The words uttered by Jesus from the Cross signify that the motherhood of her who bore Christ finds a "new" continuation in the Church and through the Church, symbolized and represented by John... 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.<sup>279</sup>

Though both St. Louis de Montfort and John Paul II explain Mary's role in the life of Christ and of Christians as that of a mother, they use different language to describe the relationship between the faithful and Mary. Montfort often speaks of "slavery" to describe the relationship of Jesus to Mary or the relationship of the Christian devoted to her. In our discussion on Baptism in chapter two, we saw that Montfort used the term "slavery" to describe "the wondrous dependence which God the Son chose to have on Mary for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of man. This dependence is revealed especially in the mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his Blessed

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<sup>278</sup> TD 152

<sup>279</sup> RM 24



Mother, depending on her for everything.”<sup>280</sup> John Paul II describes our relationship with Mary not in terms of "slavery" but in terms of a filial relationship of a child to a Mother. This change in the way John Paul II expresses the relationship is based not on a different theology of Mary since as we have just seen, both authors see Mary’s role as primarily maternal in nature. The difference in terminology is based on his philosophy of the human person and the recognition that a filial relationship with Mary is the most effective means to the freedom and the union with God for which each person hungers.

## II. Points of Departure

### A. “Slavery” vs “Filial Entrustment”

Meditating on John 19:26 in the light of the Second Vatican Council's teaching on Mary found in *Lumen Gentium* chapter eight, the Pope expresses the relationship between Jesus and Mary and likewise the relationship between the Christian and Mary not in terms of "slavery," but in terms of a filial relationship. The Second Vatican Council taught that Mary cooperated in the saving work of Christ with a maternal love. Reflecting on this point, John Paul says that we can perceive the real value of the words spoken by Jesus to his Mother at the hour of the Cross: "Woman, behold your son" and to the disciple: "Behold your mother." He says,

They are words which determine *Mary's place in the life of Christ's disciples* and they express ... the new motherhood of the Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood, born from the heart of the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer of the world. It is a motherhood in the order of grace, for it implores the gift of the Spirit, who raises up the new children of God, redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> TD 243a

<sup>281</sup> RM 44

From this point John Paul moves to John 19:27: "And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." On this passage he says:

This statement certainly means that the role of son was attributed to the disciple and that he assumed responsibility for the Mother of his beloved Master. And since Mary was given as a mother to him personally, the statement indicates, even though indirectly, everything expressed by the intimate relationship of a child with its mother. And all of this can be included in the word "entrusting." Such entrusting is *the response* to a person's love, and in particular *to the love of a mother*.<sup>282</sup>

According to the Pope, the appropriate response to the love of this Mother is described not as "slavery," but as a "filial entrustment," in which we seek to imitate the relationship between Jesus and Mary and that of the beloved disciple and Mary. As we have seen, St. Louis de Montfort stands in a long tradition of "Holy Slavery," a spirituality that goes all the way back to St. Ildephonse of Toledo. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that Montfort describes the relationship of a person totally devoted to Mary and dependent upon her as "slavery" to her. In fact he speaks of "slavery" a number of times in his writings. Examples of this may be found in *True Devotion* numbers 55-56, 75-76; *Love of Eternal Wisdom* 211, 219, 225; and *Secret of Mary* 34, 41, 61. Montfort acknowledges the long tradition from which he draws as an important witness to justify this spirituality of slavery: "Following therefore the teaching of the saints and of many great men we can call ourselves, and become, the loving slaves of our Blessed Lady in order to become perfect slaves of Jesus."<sup>283</sup>

John Paul has no problem with the term "slavery" if it is understood in the sense that Montfort is using it, as a way to describe the free and total gift of self to Jesus

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<sup>282</sup> RM 45

<sup>283</sup> TD 75

through Mary in order to possess the deepest possible union with God. In an interview with Andre Frossard John Paul defended Montfort's usage of the term "slavery."

It is well known that the author of the treatise (on *True Devotion*) defines his devotion as a form of "slavery". The word may upset our contemporaries. Personally I do not see any difficulty in it. I think we are confronted here with the sort of paradox often to be noted in the Gospels, the words "holy slavery" signifying that we could not more fully exploit our freedom, the greatest of God's gifts to us. For freedom is measured by the love of which we are capable.<sup>284</sup>

Though John Paul is a committed disciple of Montfort and greatly influenced by him he does not use the term "slavery" in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* or in the seventy general audience talks on Mary given from September 1995 to November 1997. What could be the reason for this silence? Though John Paul does not give an answer to this question directly, we may find strong reasons for his not using the term "slavery" if we come to understand his philosophy of the human person, the way he views freedom, and the sinister seduction that lies at the core every broken relationship with our Father in heaven.

## **B. John Paul II's philosophy of the human person**

Ultimately John Paul is not different from Montfort in his understanding of the relationship between God and Mary or between Mary and the person devoted to her. But, he does differ in the way he explains the devotion "to Jesus through Mary" in the light of a more developed understanding of the human person based on his personalist philosophy. In his book *Love and Responsibility*, John Paul gives the personalist norm that is the foundation for his philosophy of the human person.<sup>285</sup> He states that the person

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<sup>284</sup> Andre Frossard, *Be Not Afraid*, 126.

<sup>285</sup> Though *The Acting Person* is Karol Wojtyla's major philosophical work, I have chosen to take the specific points concerning the human person outlined here not from *The Acting Person*, but from his work *Love and Responsibility* because of difficulties in regard to the English translation of *The Acting Person*.

is a kind of a good, which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and the means to an end. In its positive form the personalist norm says that a person is an entity of a sort to which the only proper and adequate way to relate is love.<sup>286</sup>

This idea was expressed in the Second Vatican Council's document *Guadium et Spes*, which the then Archbishop Wojtyla had a large part in drafting. Article 24 of this document expresses two profoundly important points concerning the human person. Man is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself. Second, as a person, man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere giving of himself. This beautiful teaching is based on the Gospel paradox, "Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it."<sup>287</sup>

What the Second Vatican Council and John Paul II are saying is the greatest gift God has given to man is his freedom. "Because a human being - a person - possesses free will, he is his own master."<sup>288</sup> By the gift of freedom God placed man, so to speak, into his own hands so that each person possesses himself, belongs to himself. Though God is the Creator, He has given man over to himself in some manner to be his own. As a result, only that person can determine his own end.

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Rocco Buttiglione, in his book, *Karol Wojtyla, The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, Eerdmans Publ. Grand Rapids, MI, 1997, explains, "The American translation of 1979, is edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht/Boston/London:Reidel) and bears the title *The Acting Person...* Some have criticized Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka for an interpretive revision of the book, which, by carefully avoiding the technical terms which Wojtyla uses, excessively phenomenolized both his language and his ideas. The effect of this was to reduce the importance of the *hypokeimenon* or the *suppositum*, which is the metaphysical subject to which all attributions regarding the person refer. This debate makes the position of the scholar who wants to use Wojtyla's main work particularly difficult. The first edition is outdated, but the new American translation is unreliable, or at least overshadowed by doubts."

<sup>286</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, Ignatius Press., San Francisco, 1981, p. 41.

<sup>287</sup> Luke 17:33

<sup>288</sup> *Love and Responsibility* p. 24.

This power of self-determination in freedom cannot be transferred, relinquished or given to another person by will or by force. By the gift of freedom man determines the good he pursues. He cannot be made to pursue another end against his will and he cannot become the blind instrument of another for the accomplishment of their end. John Paul says, "No one else can want for me. No one can substitute his act of will for mine... I am and must be independent in my actions."<sup>289</sup>

Based on these principles, to use another person only as a means or as a blind instrument for one's own end or purpose, apart from or even against their free will is to deprive that person of their natural right self-determination. To do this would be to deprive that person of their dignity to live as a self-determining being.<sup>290</sup> By doing so we treat that person as a slave who does not belong to himself but belongs to another against his will. This is in line with the contemporary understanding of a slave as one who is not free to determine his own ends or goals, he is forced against his will to do what the master wants. This understanding of slavery is contrary to John Paul's philosophy of the human person.<sup>291</sup> In this sense it would not be right for one person to be the slave of another, even if that other person is the Blessed Virgin Mary, nor can he be a slave to God. On this point John Paul states,

Nobody can use a person as a means toward an end, no human being, nor yet God the Creator. On the part of God, indeed, it is totally out of the question, since, by giving man an intelligent and free nature, He has thereby ordained that each man alone will decide for himself the ends of his activity, and not be a blind tool of someone else's ends. Therefore, if God intends to direct man toward certain goals, He allows him, to begin with, to know those goals, so that he may make them his own and strive toward them independently. In this amongst other things resides the most profound logic of revelation: God allows man to learn His supernatural

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. p. 27-28.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid. p. 29

ends, but the decision to strive towards an end, the choice of course, is left to man's free will. God does not redeem man against his will.<sup>292</sup>

How, then, is it possible, as *Gaudium et Spes* says, for one person to give himself away to another, such as to Mary through filial entrustment, and make himself belong to another without destroying oneself as a self-determining being? John Paul says,

What is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order and in a physical sense, can come about in the order of love and in a moral sense. In this sense, one person can give himself or herself, can surrender entirely to another, whether to a human person or to God, and such a giving of the self creates a special form of love which we define as betrothed love.<sup>293</sup>

As John Paul sees it, the human person belongs to himself and only he can determine the end of his actions and the end of those actions must lead to the greatest good. The human person is also a creature who can fully discover himself only through a sincere giving of himself. From this we see that each individual person must determine his own end consciously and freely and that he was created to be a free gift for others. We also mentioned how a human person cannot be possessed by another person against their will, nor can they relinquish their free will and become a blind instrument for another who determines their actions for them. But, John Paul says, a person can make a conscious and free gift of oneself to another person to belong to the beloved in a union of love.<sup>294</sup> In love the human person consciously, freely and continuously determines his own end, that is, to give a sincere gift of oneself to the beloved.

To give oneself to another to belong to them in love is not a contradiction to all that is true concerning the fact that we must always remain self-determining beings. The

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. p. 96-97.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid. p. 98.

reason for this is that the only way a person could be a free gift for others in love is if he first possessed himself. One cannot give that which one does not possess. It is precisely because the human person possesses himself that he is able to give himself to another consciously and freely. And this is exactly what love is. An animal is not able to love, to give itself to another for the very reason that it does not possess itself. The animal is not gathered into itself with its own interiority, is not handed over to itself, it acts and reacts, but does not hold itself in its hands so as to make a gift of self.

It follows, then, that belonging to another in love is not opposed to belonging to oneself as a person; just the contrary, we are empowered by our belonging to ourselves to give ourselves to another in love. This does not destroy one's freedom to determine oneself since the person consciously and freely chooses the end of one's belonging. And the more a person possesses himself the more fully he can give of himself. It follows then that the fullness of freedom and "the fullest, the most uncompromising form of love consists precisely in self-giving, in making one's inalienable and non-transferable 'I' someone else's property."<sup>295</sup> And in this the 'I' is not destroyed but enlarged and enriched. By a great paradox of personhood, persons never belong so truly to themselves as when they give themselves away.

Christ gives testimony to this type of love in the great paradox of the Gospel, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it."<sup>296</sup> Based on this philosophy of the human person John Paul describes Mary's total gift of self to the person and work of Christ not in terms of "slavery," which might imply the loss or giving

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid. p. 97.

<sup>296</sup> Matthew 10:39

up of one's freedom. He expresses the gift of self in terms of Mary's self-emptying in faith, through her chosen vocation to virginity and her consent to motherhood.

Therefore, by coming to a better understanding of his anthropology, we see that John Paul articulates with a more developed philosophy of the human person what Montfort sought to say by using the term "slavery." They both seek to express a total dedication of oneself to the person and work of Christ by means of the maternal role of Mary, recognizing all the while that this gift of self flows from a conscious and free decision. It would not be too bold to say that John Paul's vision and articulation of Mary's faith and virginity is the "new version" of "holy slavery." For through faith and virginity a person gives a total gift of self to Christ and his work flowing from an internal spousal desire, a "betrothed love" that expresses the fullness of freedom.

Contemporary man understands slavery as imposed from outside, stripping the human person of freedom. Correctly, modern man recoils from expressing his relationship with God in this way. To use the term "slavery" in contemporary teaching is likely to impart a misunderstanding of the relationship between God and the human person as well as a misunderstanding of the relationship between Mary and the believer who entrusts himself totally to her. The term "slavery" may distort the relationship by painting it as one of a master and a slave in which the human person relinquishes his freedom and destroys love. For without freedom how can a relationship be one of love?

As John Paul sees it, contemporary man often views freedom as license, "as an end in itself, that each human being is free when he makes use of his freedom as he wishes, and that this must be our aim in the lives of individuals and societies. In reality, freedom is a great gift only when we know how to use it consciously *for everything that*



is our true good."<sup>297</sup> According to John Paul God gives the human person freedom not to be used as he wishes and certainly not against what is true and good but that the human person can seek his Creator out of his own free will and desire. Only then could the relationship between God and man be one of love. Therefore, freedom is a gift to be used to pursue union with God, our greatest good and the end for which man was created. And the fullness of freedom is to give a free and total gift of self to God to belong to him in a union of love. Through this conscious and free gift of self, man comes to possess the Good for which he was created. For Montfort and for John Paul, total belonging to Mary, or entrustment to her, is the greatest use of one's freedom since she is the most effective way to union with Christ, the true fulfillment of mankind.

In his last meditation in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul gives what he says is truly the *key* for interpreting reality. Original Sin is not simply the breaking of God's laws. Original Sin is the attempt to *abolish fatherhood*, the Fatherhood of God. By this temptation the devil seeks to seduce man into believing that he cannot trust God and his commands. According to this seduction, God does not truly love man as a Father, rather, God is a master who wants to dominate and enslave man by his laws. As a result, the Lord appears jealous of His power over the world and over man consequently, man feels driven to fight against God to achieve freedom, a freedom God had already given him from the beginning.<sup>298</sup>

According to the Pope this view of God as a master and man as His slave is far more present in people's consciousness today than the true understanding of God as a

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<sup>297</sup> Encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* 21.

<sup>298</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994, p. 228.

loving Father to whom His children may entrust themselves without fear. This false understanding of God leads man into a servile fear, the fear of a slave. He goes on to say that the only force capable of effectively counteracting this false view of God is "the Gospel of Christ, in which the paradigm of master-slave is radically transformed into the paradigm of *father-son*."<sup>299</sup> John Paul says that in order to be set free from this servile fear modern man must cultivate an authentic *fear of God*<sup>300</sup> which is first of all the love of a son for a father. It is a filial concern that seeks to do the will of the Father out of love for Him and out of recognition that the Father's will is that which will bring happiness to the son.

Though there is nothing inherently wrong with the traditional language of "holy slavery", John Paul does not use this term precisely because it is this master-slave paradigm that grips contemporary man and can only be overcome by the father-son paradigm of the Gospel. Jesus Christ is the authentic and full expression of this filial love. He has come into the world in order to set mankind free from the sin that enslaves them. By giving mankind the grace to become children of God and by teaching them to live in imitation of His filial love mankind may be set free through love.<sup>301</sup> In order to accomplish this Christ entrusted himself to Mary to be her Son. Furthermore, he has entrusted all of humanity to the love and care of this Mother at the Cross. As our mother she cooperates with the Holy Spirit to educate and form her children in this filial love for the Father. But in order to take full advantage of Mary's spiritual maternity John Paul

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<sup>299</sup> *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* p.227.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.* p. 228.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.* 226

encourages all the faithful to entrust themselves to Jesus through the hands of Mary<sup>302</sup> that is, to entrust oneself totally to Mary as her child. The Church too encourages this filial devotion to Mary saying, "Everyone should have a genuine devotion to her and entrust his life to her motherly care."<sup>303</sup> Montfort described the relationship between the Christian and Mary as "holy slavery." John Paul has chosen to articulate this relationship with Mary not in terms of "slavery" but as the "filial love," of a child for a Mother. For as the Pope says, "Mary, the exalted Daughter of Sion, helps all her children, wherever they may be and whatever their condition, *to find in Christ the path to the Father's house.*"<sup>304</sup>

### C. "Dispenser of Grace" vs "Maternal Presence"

The second point of departure between the thought of St. Louis de Montfort and John Paul II in regard to the devotion to Jesus through Mary is apparent in the way in which each describes the mode of Mary's mediation. Though Montfort describes Mary as our Mother, he often describes the form or the way in which she is a mediatrix in terms of a distribution of grace. On the other hand, John Paul II articulates the form or modality of Mary's mediation in a very different way by introducing a precise term that emphasizes the maternal character of her mediation in Christ.

In his writings, Montfort refers to Mary more than eleven times as the dispenser of all the graces of her Son. Examples of this may be found in his works *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, number 207; *Secret of Mary*, number 10; and in *True Devotion*, numbers 23, 24, 25, 28, 44, 54, 140, 206, and 208. For instance Montfort states,

God the Son imparted to his mother all that he gained by his life and death, namely, his infinite merits and his eminent virtues. He made her the treasurer of

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<sup>302</sup> RM 48

<sup>303</sup> *Second Vatican Council Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People a. 4*, Austin Flannery, O.P. 1975.

<sup>304</sup> RM 47

all his Father had given him as heritage. Through her he applies his merits to his members and through her he transmits his virtues and distributes his graces. She is his mystic channel, his aqueduct, through which he causes his mercies to flow gently and abundantly.<sup>305</sup>

Elsewhere he says,

God the Holy Spirit entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary, his faithful spouse, and chose her as the dispenser of all he possesses, so that she distributes all his gifts and graces to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills and when she wills. No heavenly gift is given to men which does not pass through her virginal hands.<sup>306</sup>

Now, both St. Louis de Montfort and John Paul II present Mary as a mother in the life of the Church yet, the fact remains Montfort often portrays the mode of Mary's mediation in terms of a distribution of grace. In this sense Mary appears not so much as a mother but as an aqueduct or a channel, even as a bridge between the Christian and Christ. John Paul, on the other hand is very clear about the form of Mary's mediation, he sees that her mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood and that it possesses a specifically maternal character.<sup>307</sup> John Paul expresses Mary's mediation not in terms of distribution of grace but in terms of her "maternal presence." He says,

In the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: Mary at Nazareth and Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of "birth from the Holy Spirit." Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit, present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church too she continues to be a maternal presence, as is shown by the words spoken from the Cross: "Woman, behold your son!"; "Behold, your mother."<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> TD 24

<sup>306</sup> TD 25

<sup>307</sup> RM 38

<sup>308</sup> RM 24

For John Paul, Mary's mediation is not to be understood as a dispensing of the grace of Christ. Portrayed in this manner her mediation is often falsely understood to be the bridge between the believer and Christ. The Pope prefers to express her mediation in terms of her maternal presence because the Church and each of the faithful experience her saving influence in and through her being with us. Mary, in a sense, is the atmosphere in which we are continually born anew and formed by the Holy Spirit in the likeness of Christ. Fr. Frederick Jelly, O.P. explains it in this way,

Mary is not a bridge over the gap that separates us from a remote Christ... Such an approach to Marian devotion and doctrine would minimize the deepest meaning of the Incarnation, the fact that he has become a man like us, and that his sacred humanity has made him the unique mediator between God and us. Mary's greatness is that she brought him close to us, and her mediation continues to create the spiritual climate for our immediate encounter with Christ.<sup>309</sup>

This last point begs a question concerning the entire topic of this paper. If Mary is not the bridge between the Christian and Christ then why should one go to Jesus through Mary? Ultimately, the answer rests in the fact that God has given Mary a specific role in the economy of salvation, a role on which the rest of the human family and each member of that family depends for their salvation.

#### **D. Why should one go to Jesus through Mary?**

If we are to make sense out of the spirituality "to Jesus through Mary," it is necessary to understand it within the context of the principle of solidarity. Though John Paul II articulates this principle in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,<sup>310</sup> it is explained in more detail in *Gaudium et Spes* which, as we mentioned above, John Paul II helped to

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<sup>309</sup> American Bishop's Pastoral Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, U. S. Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C., 1973, a. 67.

<sup>310</sup> John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston MA,, a. 38-40; *Centesimus Annus*, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA, a. 10; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1939, 48.

draft.<sup>311</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* states that mankind was created in the image of God who is triune. In the Trinity there are three divine persons who live in an eternal exchange of love. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II says it in this way,

God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility of love and communion.<sup>312</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* goes on to say that mankind created to image God in His eternal exchange of love was not created to live in isolation.<sup>313</sup> As the document says, “For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.”<sup>314</sup> Consequently, being created in the image of God who is a personal loving communion mankind, likewise, is designed to live in community. Thus, no person is self-sufficient.

All persons share an equal dignity based on the fact that all are endowed with a rational soul and a free will. All have come from the same origin and all are called to the same destiny - union with God, sharing in His divine life as His children.<sup>315</sup> Yet, inequalities and differences exist among the individual members of the human family in regard to spiritual and material goods. It is evident that we enter this world not possessing everything we need for the full development of our bodily and spiritual life. We stand in need of others. We see that the little child needs the care of its parents for its physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual development. Even once we reach adulthood we find that

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<sup>311</sup> Second Vatican Council Document, *Gaudium et Spes*, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA, 1965, (Hereafter cited as GES).

<sup>312</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, MA, 1981, a. 11.

<sup>313</sup> GES 32

<sup>314</sup> GES 12

<sup>315</sup> GES 29, 19

these inequalities and differences remain. These are tied to age, physical abilities, intellectual and moral aptitudes, the benefits derived from social commerce, and the distribution of wealth.<sup>316</sup> Our Lord made it clear in the Gospel the talents are not distributed equally.<sup>317</sup> In fact, these inequalities and differences belong to God's plan. He "wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular talents share the benefits with those who need them."<sup>318</sup> These inequalities necessitate that the human person live in interdependence with others.

This interdependence is a call from God to charity. It is a call to share the spiritual and material gifts or talents each has received with those in need, and to receive from others all he lacks in order that every person may reach his goal.<sup>319</sup> This is the principle of solidarity, which is the virtue that practices the sharing of spiritual as well as material goods. By putting this principle into practice mankind reflects the life of the Trinity, living as a mutual exchange of love and gifts.

God has designed the human person to reflect the image of God to the world. For this reason, God created him to be, by his very nature, completely in need of social life.<sup>320</sup> This social life is not something added on; it is part of our nature. "Through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny."<sup>321</sup> To help us reach this destiny God has also designed certain social structures to help in the development of the human person. The

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<sup>316</sup> GES 29; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1936

<sup>317</sup> Matthew 25: 14-30

<sup>318</sup> GES 29; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1937

<sup>319</sup> GES 29

<sup>320</sup> GES 25

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

family and the political community are two such communities. The need for these communities flows from the inner nature of the human person, created to reflect the life of the Trinity by living in interdependence, in a mutual exchange of love with others.<sup>322</sup>

On the natural level, we see that God ordained the human person to come into the world, develop, and mature to his full potential within the social structure of the family. As a community the family has an order, specific roles, and an interdependence between the individuals. There is an analogy between the order of nature and the order of grace. *Gaudium et Spes* goes on to say, “As God did not create man for isolation, but for the formation of social unity, so also it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals, without bond or link between them, but by making them into a single people.”<sup>323</sup>

Through the covenants God established with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and finally through His Son, Jesus Christ, we see that from the beginning, God has chosen to save all of mankind by means of a covenant family. *Gaudium et Spes* states,

Christ commanded His Apostles to preach to all peoples the Gospel message that the human race was to become the Family of God, in which the fullness of the Law would be love. As the Firstborn of many brethren and by the giving of His Spirit, He founded after His death and resurrection a new brotherly community composed of all those who receive Him in faith and love. This He did through His Body, which is the Church. There everyone, as members one of the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each. This solidarity must be constantly increased until that day on which it will be brought to perfection.<sup>324</sup>

The answer to the question: “Why should we go to Jesus through Mary?” lies in the fact that we are not saved in isolation but as part of the covenant family, which is the

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> GES 32

<sup>324</sup> GES 32



Church. God has given this family a Mother in the order of grace, a mother on whom all who come to the Father through the one mediator Jesus Christ will depend. In the presentation of *Redemptoris Mater*, we demonstrated how Christ established Mary to be the Mother of this Covenant Family. John Paul emphasizes that just as a child is dependent upon his mother for his birth and development, education and formation, we too, in the family of the Church, are dependent upon the maternal love and care of Mary, which is made fruitful by the Holy Spirit. John Paul says, "Motherhood always establishes a *unique and unrepeatability relationship* between two people: *between mother and child* and *between child and mother*."<sup>325</sup> The beauty of motherhood is that even when there are many children in one family, each child has a personal relationship with their mother. In this relationship, each child is surrounded in the same way by that maternal love on which are based the child's development and coming to maturity as a human being.<sup>326</sup> John Paul goes on to say that motherhood in the order of grace preserves the analogy of motherhood in the order of nature. Just as a natural mother has a personal relationship with each of her children and the child's development and coming to maturity are based in a significant way on this maternal relationship, so too Mary desires to develop a personal relationship with each of her children who share in the divine life of Jesus, her Son. The Pope states, "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."<sup>327</sup>

It must be made clear Mary does not carry out this role in the Church by her own

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<sup>325</sup> RM 45

<sup>326</sup> RM 45

<sup>327</sup> RM 45

power. Her maternal role in the Church is made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, just as her role in the Incarnation was made fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit. John Paul states:

And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: *Mary at Nazareth* and *Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem*. In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of “birth from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>328</sup>

John Paul sees in the Wedding of Cana an important insight to help us understand Mary’s role in the Church. The Pope says, “The meaning and role of the Blessed Virgin’s presence became evident when the wine ran out.”<sup>329</sup> He points out that at Cana, when Mary realized the problem the couple faced she turned with faith and a trusting abandonment to the Lord and said, “They have no wine.”<sup>330</sup> Because of her faith in Jesus, she expected Him to solve the problem. Thus, her faith led her to intercede for the bride and groom, which resulted in Jesus providing a miraculous abundance of new wine. The Evangelist points out that through this miracle, the glory of the Lord was manifested and the faith of the disciples increased.<sup>331</sup>

Through the event of Cana, we see how Mary contributed by her faith and intercession to obtain for the wedding party an abundance of new wine. What takes place at Cana gives us an insight to the birth of Christ and the birth of the Church. At the Annunciation, Mary abandoned herself to God in faith “by believing in Jesus before seeing him,”<sup>332</sup> which opened the way for her to be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit

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<sup>328</sup> RM 24

<sup>329</sup> Ibid. p. 173.

<sup>330</sup> John 2:3

<sup>331</sup> John 2:11

<sup>332</sup> *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple; General audience of February 26, 1997 p. 174*

who brought about the conception of Jesus in her womb. In this way she cooperated with the Holy Spirit to bring about the full outpouring of God in the Incarnation. As mentioned above, John Paul highlights a “unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church.”<sup>333</sup> What is this correspondence? What was Mary’s role in the birth of the Church at Pentecost?

The Second Vatican Council highlighted the presence of Mary among the small community of Christ’s disciples who were waiting for Pentecost by stating:

Since it has pleased God not to manifest solemnly the mystery of the salvation of the human race before he would pour forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the apostles before the day of Pentecost ‘preserving with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren’ (Acts 1:14), and Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the annunciation.<sup>334</sup>

In his general audience of May 28, 1997 John Paul asks the question, “What was Mary’s position in relation to the descent of the Holy Spirit?”<sup>335</sup> He goes by answering that the Council expressly underscored her “prayerful presence” while waiting for the outpouring of the Paraclete: “she prayed, ‘imploring the gift of the Spirit.’”<sup>336</sup> The Pope says, “This observation is especially significant since at the annunciation the Holy Spirit had descended upon her, ‘overshadowing’ her and bringing about the Incarnation of the Word.”<sup>337</sup> In this same general audience, John Paul continues by making the point that unlike those in the upper room who were waiting in a kind of fear, Mary, trusting in Jesus’ promise at the Last Supper to send the Spirit of Truth upon the Church, did not

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<sup>333</sup> RM 24

<sup>334</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 59

<sup>335</sup> *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple* p. 197.

<sup>336</sup> *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple* p. 197.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

wait in fear but “helped the community to be well disposed to the coming of the ‘Paraclete.’”<sup>338</sup> Mary disposed the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit by “preparing the minds and hearts of those around her”<sup>339</sup> and by imploring “a multiplicity of gifts for everyone, in accordance with each one’s personality and mission.”<sup>340</sup> In this way Mary strengthened the faith of the infant Church at Pentecost by obtaining through her faith and intercession the outpouring of the Holy Spirit about which mockers said, “They are filled with new wine.”<sup>341</sup>

Just as Mary’s role in relation to Jesus did not end with His birth, so too, Mary’s role does not end with the birth of the Church. Mary remains active in the Church, always ready to strengthen our faith, our trusting abandonment to the Lord, by obtaining through her intercession an increase of the Holy Spirit. In a general audience on May 28, 1997, the Pope summed up this point:

Mary’s prayer has particular significance in the Christian community. It fosters the coming of the Spirit, imploring his action in the hearts of the disciples and in the world. Just as in the Incarnation the Spirit had formed the physical body of Christ in her virginal womb, in the upper room the same Spirit came down to give life to the Mystical Body. Thus, Pentecost is also a fruit of the Blessed Virgin’s incessant prayer, which is accepted by the Paraclete with special favor because it is an expression of her motherly love for the Lord’s disciples. In contemplating Mary’s powerful intercession as she waited for the Holy Spirit, Christians of every age have frequently had recourse to her intercession on the long and tiring journey to salvation, in order to receive the gifts of the Paraclete in greater abundance.<sup>342</sup>

This is why we, as her children, need Mary. She is our mother in the order of grace and as such our development in the likeness of Christ is dependent upon our being

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid. 198.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Acts 2:13

<sup>342</sup> *Theotokos Woman, Mother, Disciple* p. 199.

surrounded by her maternal love, whereby she cooperates with the Holy Spirit to fulfill this maternal mission of educating and forming the brothers and sisters of Christ in the likeness of her Son. John Paul says that this maternal relationship with Mary that begins by entrusting oneself to her is "*definitively directed towards him*. Mary can be said to continue to say to each individual the words, which she spoke at Cana in Galilee: 'Do whatever he tells you.' ... And it is well known that the more her children persevere and progress in this attitude, the nearer Mary leads them to the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.'<sup>343</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As we compare the way in which St. Louis de Montfort presents the role of Mary in the life of Christ and her role in the Church to the presentation of John Paul II, we see significant points of agreement. Both of our authors stress the importance of Mary's presence in the redeeming work of Christ and as His work is continued through the Church. In *True Devotion*, Montfort highlights Mary's role in the economy of salvation. He emphasizes that it is through her presence that God began His redeeming work and likewise, it is through her that he will have brought it to completion at the end of time. Throughout *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul calls attention to the active presence of Mary with the hope that, once we become convinced of her presence and her role in the history of salvation, we will entrust ourselves to her in imitation of Christ in the Incarnation. We also noted that both Montfort and John Paul present Mary as our Mother. Both for her Son and for His Body, she is present as a mother and with a mother's devoted care.

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<sup>343</sup> RM 46

In regard to the use of the term “slavery” we are faced with an important point of departure. It is here that John Paul II makes a significant contribution to the devotion “to Jesus through Mary” by describing the relationship between the believer and Mary not in terms of “slavery” but rather as filial love. Montfort used the term “slavery” to describe “the wondrous dependence which God the Son chose to have on Mary for the glory of his Father and for the redemption of man. This dependence is revealed especially in the this mystery where Jesus becomes a captive and slave in the womb of his Blessed Mother, depending on her for everything.”<sup>344</sup> John Paul II describes our relationship with Mary not in terms of "slavery" but in terms of a filial relationship of a child to a Mother. Ultimately John Paul is not different from Montfort in his understanding of the relationship between Jesus and Mary or between Mary and the person devoted to her. But, he is different in the way he explains the devotion "to Jesus through Mary" based on a more developed understanding of the human person seen in the light of his personalist norm. With the gift of freedom God has ordained that the human person in some manner belongs to himself and is his own master. Only he can determine the end of his actions. This power of self-determination cannot be given to or taken over by another person, be it God or another human person, such as Mary.<sup>345</sup> Here the Pope makes a critical distinction. Though a person is his own master and cannot give oneself away in such a manner as to surrender one's power or right of self-determination<sup>346</sup> a person can make a conscious and free gift of oneself to another person to belong to them in a union of love.<sup>347</sup> In love the human person consciously, freely and continuously determines his own end, that is, to give a

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<sup>344</sup> TD 243a

<sup>345</sup> *Love and Responsibility* p. 96.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.* p. 96

sincere gift of oneself to the beloved. It follows, then, that belonging to another in love is not opposed to belonging to oneself as a person; just the contrary, we are empowered by our belonging to ourselves to give ourselves to another in love. This does not destroy one's freedom to determine oneself since the person consciously and freely chooses the end of one's belonging. And the more a person possesses himself the more fully he can give of himself. It follows then that the fullness of freedom and "the fullest, the most uncompromising form of love consists precisely in self-giving, in making one's inalienable and non-transferable 'I' someone else's property."<sup>348</sup> Therefore, by coming to a better understanding of his anthropology, we see that John Paul articulates with a more developed philosophy of the human person what Montfort sought to say by using the term "slavery." They both seek to express a total dedication of oneself to the person and work of Christ flowing from a conscious and free decision. In this regard the way in which John Paul explains Mary's faith and virginity is the "new version" of "holy slavery." For through faith and virginity a person gives a total gift of self to Christ and his work flowing from an internal spousal desire, a "betrothed love" that expresses the fullness of freedom.

A second point of departure between Montfort and John Paul can be found in the way each describes the mode of Mary's mediation. Though Montfort sees Mary as our spiritual mother, he often describes her mediation in terms of a dispensing of her Son's grace. This could lead to the false idea that Mary is a bridge between Christ and the faithful. John Paul, on the other hand, emphasizes the maternal character of Mary's

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid. p. 98.  
<sup>348</sup> Ibid. p. 97.

mediation by describing it in terms of her “maternal presence.” According to John Paul, Mary is not a channel or a bridge connecting Christ and the Church, she is our Mother who is present with us and it is specifically through this maternal presence and maternal influence that we experience her saving role empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We closed this section by posing the question: Why should we go to Jesus through Mary? There we proposed that the human person, made in the image of God who is a mutual exchange of love, is called to reflect the life of the Trinity to the world. Thus, we are created to live interdependently as a community of persons who share with one another the gifts each has received from God. This is the principle of solidarity. In light of this principle we can see how God has chosen not to save us in isolation but as a family. In this covenant family that we call the Church, God has established Mary to be our Mother in the order of grace. As her children we stand in need of her role. She cooperates with the Holy Spirit to give us birth in the life of grace and then to educate and form her children in the likeness of Christ. She accomplishes this by the power of the Holy Spirit for as John Paul stated concerning this motherhood of Mary: “It is a motherhood in the order of grace, for it implores the gift of the Spirit, who raises up the new children of God, redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ.”<sup>349</sup>

In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* John Paul expressed his earnest desire that one day Christians would break down the walls that divide the Body of Christ in order that we might fulfill the great prayer of Christ at the Last Supper, “that they may be one.” It is well known that Mary has been an obstacle to Christian unity for centuries, especially between the Catholic Church and Protestant Christianity. For this reason it is of vital

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<sup>349</sup> RM 44



importance to devote the next chapter of this paper to a discussion of the objections that are raised in regard to devotion to Mary and then to go on to answer those objections in a manner that may lend to this earnest desire of Christ and of John Paul II for unity.

## Part II: To Jesus Through Mary: Theological Perspectives

### Introduction

After examining the history of the devotion to Jesus through Mary, we have seen that it is deeply rooted in the spiritual Tradition of the Church. We analyzed the way in which St. Louis de Montfort brought this devotion to a high point theologically and in practice. In chapter three we saw how John Paul II, under the influence of Montfort, represented this devotion to a contemporary audience. Yet, we must acknowledge that not everyone accepts this devotion as Montfort and John Paul II explain it, since both Catholics and non-Catholics alike have difficulty with the role of Mary in the life of Christ and of the Church. It is the purpose of Part II to discuss the roots of these difficulties and to respond to them, but before we do it must be noted that since the Second Vatican Council much progress has been made in the area of ecumenical dialogue concerning the role of Mary in the Christian life.

Since the Council there have been several international congresses on Mary, held at various centers of Marian devotion throughout the world, in which Catholic and non-Catholic theologians have discussed the areas of difficulty in regard to Mary. These have resulted in a number of ecumenical statements.<sup>350</sup> Fr. Frederick Jelly O.P., documenting the Anglican, Protestant and Roman Catholic dialogues on Mary since Vatican II cites

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<sup>350</sup> Cf. Fr. Frederick Jelly O.P., *Mariology and Ecumenism-Reflections Upon*, p. 547; Fr. Eamon Carroll, *Ecumenical Roundtables at International Mariological Congresses*, p. 566; both in *Mater Fidei et Fidelium, Collected Essays to Honor Fr. T. Koehler on His 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Marian Library Studies, Dayton OH, 1990.

specific areas of progress as well as three critical areas that are yet unresolved.<sup>351</sup> Fr. Jelly cites the following points of agreement reached through ecumenical dialogue:

1) all Christian praise, including that of Mary and the saints, is praise of God and Jesus Christ; 2) imitation is an important aspect of devotion to Mary, particularly of her spiritual attitude in responding with complete openness to the Word of God; 3) the distinction between the veneration due the Mother of God and the adoration due to God alone remains vital for all of us; and 4) while the precise meaning of invocation, not practiced in all the Christian churches, is in need of further elucidation, there is a common belief that those in the communion of saints in glory, among whom Mary holds the first place, do pray for us sinners upon earth – which intercession in no way affects the unique mediatorship of the risen Lord.<sup>352</sup>

He goes on to underscore three main difficulties that have not been resolved. The first issue is the reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. This is the principle that unless a doctrine is clearly and explicitly taught in the Bible, it may not be accepted as a dogma of faith. According to Fr. Jelly “the question of Scripture and Tradition is behind much of what still separates Catholics and Lutherans regarding the saints and Mary.”<sup>353</sup> Second, the Protestant principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*, which hold that justification is through faith alone, as entirely the work of God’s grace without any role for the cooperation of human freedom, present a special difficulty in Marian doctrine and devotion.<sup>354</sup> The third area left unresolved is the Protestant understanding of the principle that Christ alone is the mediator between God and humanity. On this point Fr. Jelly remarks,

To attribute mediation and intercession to Mary and the saints in glory appears to render superfluous the unique mediatorship of Christ, the sole Redeemer of all.

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<sup>351</sup> Fr. Frederick Jelly O.P., *Mariology and Ecumenism-Reflections Upon*, p. 547-565, *Mater Fidei et Fidelium, Collected Essays to Honor Fr. T. Koehler on His 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Marian Library Studies, Dayton OH, 1990.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. p. 551.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. p. 562.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. p. 550.

And the practice of our invoking their intercessory prayer on our behalf is not only without scriptural support but is also very confusing and likely to lead, as it often has in popular piety, to the motive of directly praying to Mary and the saints because their merits make such a claim upon divine favor that God cannot refuse them – and so they seem to become the source of the blessing instead of God through Christ – or – because the intercession of the saints, especially Mary, is necessary before Christ, the Just Judge, will respond mercifully to us sinners.<sup>355</sup>

Despite progress in ecumenical dialogue there still remain key difficulties for both Catholics and non-Catholics in regard to the devotion to Jesus through Mary. Many people believe they do not need Mary to go to Jesus and they prefer to go directly to Him. Many fear devotion to Mary will distract them from a deeper relationship with Christ. Some believe the Catholic Church replaces Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit with Mary. On both sides the devotion to Jesus through Mary is misunderstood. Following Fr. Jelly's analysis of the key areas that are yet unresolved in the ecumenical dialogue, I would like to propose two main reasons for this misunderstanding.

First, the devotion to Jesus through Mary is not explicitly stated or explained, nor can it be logically deduced from Sacred Scripture alone. This is a key difficulty since many believe the Bible to be the sole rule of faith. William Webster in his book, *Salvation, the Bible and Roman Catholicism*, states:

The first issue to be addressed in any discussion of spiritual truth is that of authority. To say something is true or false implies an authoritative standard by which we can make such a judgment. But is there such an authoritative standard by which we can judge whether a particular teaching or system is true or false? The answer is an unequivocal 'yes.' That authoritative standard is the Word of God, the Bible... Consequently, we can judge whether or not a particular teaching or tradition is true by comparing it to the Word of God. If it is consistent with the Word of God, then we can accept it as truth. However, if it clearly contradicts the teaching of the Bible or makes the Word of God contradict itself, then we know that it is error, and is to be rejected.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid. p. 557.

<sup>356</sup> William Webster, *Salvation, The Bible, and Roman Catholicism*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh EH, 1990, p. 14.

This difficulty which flows from the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, leads to a series of questions: What is our rule of faith, in other words, in what does the Word of God or divine Revelation consist; how is it handed down through the generations; and how is it interpreted authoritatively? These questions are taken up and answered in Chapter One.

Second, many people experience difficulty with the devotion to Jesus through Mary based on a misunderstanding of God's economy of salvation. This misunderstanding is closely associated with the reformation principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. At the root of this difficulty is the denial that, supported by God's grace, human beings can cooperate in the work of salvation. Karl Barth (d. 1968), a Swiss theologian from the Reformed Calvinist tradition and one of the greatest Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, severely condemns attributing a role of cooperation or mediation to Mary in the economy of salvation. He argues that Protestantism cannot allow creaturely cooperation in God's revelation and reconciliation since these are exclusively God's work.<sup>357</sup> Barth states, "Precisely in the doctrine and cult of Mary there resides par excellence the heresy of the Roman Catholic Church ... the human creature collaborates in his salvation, on the basis of a prevenient grace, consequently she (Mary) constitutes also very exactly the principle, the prototype and sum of the Church itself."<sup>358</sup>

I will respond to this denial by establishing a reasoned theological explanation of God's economy of salvation and the place of human cooperation in that plan, based upon

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<sup>357</sup> Barth, Karl, *Dogmatics*, translated by O. Wyon, Philadelphia, 1952, Vol. 2, p.146, found in *Mariology*, ed. By Carol, Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, 1961, vol. 3, p. 434.

<sup>358</sup> Barth, Karl, *Esquisse d'une dogmatique*, Paris, 1050, p. 127, found in *Mariology*, ed. By Carol, Bruce Pub. Co., Milwaukee, 1961, vol. 3, p. 434.

the central truth of the Incarnation. This will be the foundation which will enable us in Chapter Five to understand Mary's role in the economy of salvation and to see why it is truly effective to embrace her maternal role through the devotion to Jesus through Mary.

Once we have addressed these two main sources of misunderstanding I will conclude Chapter Five by addressing three specific issues that appear as obstacles to Marian devotion. Here I will first take up the Protestant principle of *sola Christus*, (Christ alone) which is based in part on 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Second, I will address the common misconception that Catholics worship Mary. And third, if Mary is not worshipped as a deity, then what is the meaning and purpose of the Marian title "Queen of Heaven?"

The purpose of Part II of this study then, is not to catalog every difficulty or objection with regard to this devotion and then attempt to answer each difficulty one by one. This may be profitable in another study, but here, our goal is to uncover the root of the difficulty concerning the devotion to Jesus through Mary and then to establish a reasoned theological argument in favor of the devotion based upon an authentic understanding of God's economy of salvation as demonstrated by the doctrine of the Incarnation.

## **Chapter 1: Revelation and the Economy of Salvation**

### **I. The Word of God is Transmitted by Christ to the Apostles**

Because it is not found explicitly in Sacred Scripture, consideration of the devotion to Jesus through Mary leads to the questions: What is our rule of faith, in other words, where do we find the Word of God or divine Revelation; how is it handed down through the generations; and how is it interpreted authoritatively? From the Catholic perspective the Bible by itself is not the full Word of God, nor is it the sole rule of faith. Jesus is the Word of God as John says in the first chapter of his Gospel, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." During His life and especially during His public ministry Jesus taught mankind how to live and how to gain entrance into the Kingdom of His Father. He taught by word and example but He also picked twelve men and took them to Himself in a special way. For three years He taught them and He endowed them with His own authority to teach. Finally He commissioned them to go out and teach all nations everything He had taught to them, until the end of time.

Before His suffering and death, He promised to send the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth to aid them in their teaching and sanctifying ministry: "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."<sup>359</sup> And, "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth."<sup>360</sup> Once He had ascended to the Father He fulfilled this promise and sent the Spirit of Truth upon

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<sup>359</sup> John 14:25-26

<sup>360</sup> John 16:12

Peter and the Apostles at Pentecost. In the power of the Holy Spirit the Apostles went out and taught the Good News of Christ in two ways. The Apostles handed on the Gospel of Christ orally and in writing, “by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received, whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had themselves learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit;” and “by those Apostles and other men associated with the Apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing.”<sup>361</sup>

Jesus not only entrusted His teaching to the Apostles, Christ entrusted His own teaching authority to these men, who were the first bishops, and then He commanded them to go out and teach all nations. They in turn entrusted their teaching authority to other worthy men, their successors who were also bishops endowed by the Apostles with the authority to teach, to carry on this sacred mission until the end of time. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, “In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them ‘their own position of teaching authority.’ Indeed, the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time.”<sup>362</sup> This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition. “Through Tradition the Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is and all that she believes.”<sup>363</sup> Again the Second Vatican Council taught:

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<sup>361</sup> CCC 74-83

<sup>362</sup> CCC 77; St. Irenaeus, *Adv Haeres.* 3,3,1: PG 7, 848.

<sup>363</sup> CCC 78



Hence there exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, Sacred Tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same devotion and reverence.<sup>364</sup>

The teaching of Christ is found in the teaching of the Apostles handed down to today through Holy Tradition and Sacred Scripture, always guarded from error and interpreted faithfully by the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. The Magisterium consists of the successors of Peter and the Apostles, the Pope and the bishops in union with him. What Christ entrusted to the Apostles, they in turn handed on by their teaching and writing, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to all generations, through their successors and it will remain the same until Christ returns in glory.<sup>365</sup> Thus, it is not from the Bible alone that we draw our certainty about the teachings of Christ. Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God.<sup>366</sup> Tradition hands on in its full purity God's Word. And the task of interpreting the Word of God authentically is entrusted to the Magisterium of the Church.<sup>367</sup> This is the nature of divine Revelation in God's economy of salvation. Now, another question follows: can it be demonstrated that Christ instituted this teaching authority that faithfully interprets the Word of God for all of time? I will make the case in the section that follows

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<sup>364</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 9.

<sup>365</sup> CCC 96

<sup>366</sup> CCC 97

<sup>367</sup> CCC 100

that Christ entrusted His own teaching authority to the Apostles, and through them to the Church, intending that this teaching authority would reside with the Magisterium of the Church until the end of time. I will use the Gospel of Matthew to formulate this argument directly from Scripture.<sup>368</sup>

## II. The Word is Handed Down Through the Church

Before we begin it should be noted that my intention is not to provide an exegetical study of the Scripture texts to be used in this section. My intention is to interpret these passages in the light of Magisterial teaching found especially in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Cited below are a number of authorities that are able to provide an exegetical study of the texts we will use here.<sup>369</sup> In the Gospel of Matthew chapters one through nine we learn who Jesus is: Emmanuel, “God with us.” In Matthew chapters five through nine Jesus establishes his identity as the Son of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, chapters five through seven, Jesus gives His main body of teaching and when He finishes, the crowds are “astonished at his teaching for He taught them as having authority, not as their

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<sup>368</sup> The Gospel of Matthew is chosen to demonstrate the teaching authority of the Church for the following reason articulated by Peter Ellis in his book, *Matthew, his mind and his message*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1974, p. 114-115: “It will be Matthew’s contention that Christ by virtue of his supreme authority as Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God has invested the Apostles with authority to be the leaders of the true Israel in place of its old leaders, the Pharisees and elders; that among the Apostles Peter and his successors are to enjoy a primacy of authority; that the true Israel led by the Apostles has been commissioned to discipline all nations, initiating them into the Church by baptizing and teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded concerning the will of the Father.”

<sup>369</sup> Brown, R.E., Fitzmeyer, J.A., Murphy, R.E., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1990; Brown, R.E., *The Gospel According to John* (The Anchor Bible, Vols. 29 and 29a), Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1970; Brown, R.E., *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine*, Paulist Press, New York, 1985; Ellis, Peter, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1984; Kingsbury, J., *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1975; Metzger, Bruce M.A., *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, New York, 1971; Wainwright, Elaine Mary, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew*, De Gruyter, New York, 1991.

scribes.”<sup>370</sup> Even by His teaching, the people recognize that someone greater than Moses is present.

Then in chapters 8-9, Jesus works miracle after miracle confirming He truly is God with us. Chapter 9:1-8, gives a beautiful example. A paralytic is brought to Jesus and He says to him, “Take heart my son; your sins are forgiven.” Immediately the scribes are outraged because only God has the authority to forgive sins. Then to give proof that He has this divine authority Jesus says, “But that you may know the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins” and turning to the paralytic, says, “Rise, take up your bed and go home. When the crowds saw it they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.” In Mt 9:33, “The crowds marveled, saying, ‘Never was anything like this seen in Israel.’” Through His teaching and miracles Jesus establishes His divine identity and His divine authority.

But, how do the leaders and shepherds of Israel, the Pharisees, respond to the teaching and miracles of Jesus? The Pharisees respond by saying, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”<sup>371</sup> “By the power of the devil he does these things.” By this response, the leaders of Israel formally reject Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus laments because His people are like sheep without shepherds since the shepherds, the Pharisees, have abandoned the flock and worse, they have become as wolves in sheep’s clothing leading the flock to destruction by leading them away from Jesus, the Messiah.<sup>372</sup> The Pharisees, the leaders of God’s covenant people, by rejecting Jesus have rejected God. He must

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<sup>370</sup> Matthew 7:28

<sup>371</sup> Matthew 9:34

<sup>372</sup> Matthew 9:36-38

appoint new leaders for His people, new shepherds to guide and guard his covenant family.

Jesus turns to the Apostles and says, “The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”<sup>373</sup> Immediately Jesus entrusts the Apostles with His own divine authority and sends them out to stand in His place and to act in His name as the new leaders of the covenant people. “And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and heal every disease and every infirmity...And preach as you go saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.”<sup>374</sup> Jesus appoints the laborers, the new leaders of God’s covenant family to take the place of the Pharisees who have rejected Him. Jesus sends the Apostles out in his name and with his authority to do all that he has been doing. When the people see the Apostles heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons and preach the kingdom they see the Apostles do everything Jesus has done, they recognize that the Apostles act in the name and with the authority and power of Jesus. We see this clearly in Mt 10: 11-15. Jesus commands the Apostles,

And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart. As you enter the house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Jesus entrusts the Apostles with His own authority and then He sends them out to

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<sup>373</sup> Matthew 9:37

<sup>374</sup> Matthew 10:1,7-8

teach and preach in His name. If the people will not listen to them it will go better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. That is unprecedented authority. Jesus endows the Apostles with His own divine authority and in Matthew 10:40 he says to them, “He who receives you receives me...” In Luke 10:16 this authority is expressed in even stronger terms, “He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me . . .”

In Matthew 16, Jesus, the Davidic King, appoints a prime minister to stand in His place to teach, lead and govern the Kingdom once He departs to the Father until He returns in power. As Jesus and the disciples come to Caesarea Philippi, He turns to Peter and says, “Who do you say that I am? Peter answers, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” To this great confession Jesus responds, “Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death will not prevail against it.”<sup>375</sup>

To the Jewish ears of the Apostles this proclamation would have carried with it a great deal of meaning. If they did not fully understand it at the time they surely would have after the Resurrection and Pentecost when the Holy Spirit opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. In using this phrase, Jesus draws from the prophet Isaiah; the most well known of the prophets for the Jewish people. Isaiah 51:1-2, “You who seek the Lord; look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were digged. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him and made him many.” God established His covenant family, Israel, on the Rock of Abraham, and now Christ restores the covenant family of

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<sup>375</sup> Matthew 16:15-19

God on the Rock of Peter. Jesus says, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”<sup>376</sup> In Isaiah 22:15-22, Hezekiah, the Davidic King, dismissed Shebna, the former prime minister or master of the palace, and appointed Eliakim as the new Prime Minister. Hezekiah told his new Prime Minister that he shall be a father to Israel and, “I will place on his shoulder the Key of the house of David; he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open.”<sup>377</sup> Jesus, the Son of David, the new Davidic King, appoints Peter to be His Prime Minister to rule in His place once He has ascended to the Father until He comes again in Glory.

Matthew is not the only Evangelist who emphasized this understanding of Peter as the one who acts as Christ’s Prime Minister to govern, guide and teach the household of God in the place of the Davidic King. Luke contributed to this understanding in his account of the commissioning of Peter by Christ as guardian of the faith at the Last Supper:

“You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you (plural), that he might sift you (plural) like wheat, but I have prayed for you (singular) that your faith may not fail; and when you (singular) have turned again, strengthen your brethren.”<sup>378</sup>

Jesus makes it clear to the Apostles that they are the foundation stones of the kingdom He is establishing and that Peter is to have a special mission. By guarding his brethren from Satan’s assaults on their faith, Peter is effectively commissioned to guard their teaching

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<sup>376</sup> Matthew 16:19

<sup>377</sup> Isaiah 22:21-22

<sup>378</sup> Luke 22:28-32

from error. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirms this mandate to Peter after His Resurrection:

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep"<sup>379</sup>

Jesus rightly claims for Himself the role of the Good Shepherd, the "Chief Shepherd" as Peter calls him in 1 Peter 5:4. Before He ascends into heaven Jesus commissions Peter to continue His mission as the shepherd of the flock and to be His representative on earth. Jesus' words to Peter, "feed my lambs, feed my sheep," explain Peter's mission as one of provision for the needs of the Lord's flock. Just as a father's provision for his family involves not only food, but formation in truth and protection against deceit, Peter's role gives the Church reliable teaching and governance. On this Rock, Jesus establishes the Church against which hell itself cannot prevail. "Jesus Christ put Peter at the head of the other Apostles, and in him he set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity of both faith and communion."<sup>380</sup> Where Peter is, there is Christ's Church. In union with him we know with certainty the way that leads to the full teaching of Christ. When Peter pays the temple tax for Christ and for himself, in Matthew chapter seventeen, he demonstrates his authority to act in Christ's name:

When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, 'Does not your teacher pay the tax?'" Jesus said to Peter, "However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the

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<sup>379</sup> John 21:15-17

<sup>380</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 18.

first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.<sup>381</sup>

Then in Matthew chapter 18, Jesus extends the authority given to Peter to the entire college of the twelve Apostles, “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”<sup>382</sup> The Church has always held that this power to bind and loose given by Christ to the Apostles indicates the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. This is the power to lead and teach all Christians for all time with the authority of Christ.

Jesus reaffirms the giving of His own divine authority to the Church through the office of the Apostles and particularly through the office of Peter. Jesus has given the Apostles His own authority to teach and lead the covenant family of God. Christ expects the Apostles to hold for all time this office of Pope and Bishop.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age.<sup>383</sup>

How could they hold this office for all time? Peter and the Apostles were to have successors to carry on their office and role until the end of time. In Acts 1:15-26, one of the twelve, Judas, is dead and Peter and the other Apostles are convinced that his office must be filled. The Apostles, knowing full well that Christ had established their role as one that would continue, appoint Matthias to take the place of Judas as his successor as Bishop. Peter stands up among the brethren in the Upper Room and explains the need to

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<sup>381</sup> Matthew 17:24-27

<sup>382</sup> Matthew 18:18

<sup>383</sup> Matthew 28:18-20



replace Judas in light of Old Testament prophecies that one among us would fall and his office filled by another.<sup>384</sup> The term for office in the Greek is “episkopos,” which in English is “episcopate,” another word for bishop.

The Apostle’s understanding of their authority is shown in the earliest history of the Church as recorded in the Book of Acts. As they established communities of believers in different parts of the world they literally “handed” on their office of Bishop to other men to lead and govern the Church.<sup>385</sup> The Apostles do continue to teach, govern and guide the Church through their successors, the Pope and the bishops. In light of this, Jesus’ words to the Apostles, He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me,<sup>386</sup> makes sense for the faithful today. When we follow the teaching of the Magisterium we are following the Apostles, we are following Christ. It is true that the whole body of the faithful share in understanding and handing on Revelation, since they have been anointed by the Spirit of Truth, and cannot err in matters of belief, when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals, yet this supernatural sense of the faith is always guided by the Magisterium.<sup>387</sup>

We learn through a letter written in the first century by Clement of Rome, who was a disciple of Peter, that the early Church was absolutely convinced that our Lord continues to guide the Church through the office of the bishops established by Christ.

Clement writes:

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<sup>384</sup> Acts 1:15-20

<sup>385</sup> cf. Acts 20:28

<sup>386</sup> Luke 10:16

<sup>387</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 12.

Through countryside and city they (Apostles) preached; and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this a novelty: for bishops and deacons had been written about a long time earlier. Indeed, Scripture somewhere says: 'I will set up their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.' Our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the office of bishop. For this reason, therefore, having received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have already been mentioned, and afterwards added the further provision that, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry.<sup>388</sup>

St. Irenaeus, a student of St. Polycarp who was a disciple of St. John, tells us how the teaching of Christ is passed down to us, through the official teaching of the Apostles and the bishops they ordained to succeed them.

The true knowledge is the teaching of the Apostles...passed down through the succession of bishops in charge of the Church...which has come down to our own time, safeguarded, without...addition or subtraction...avoiding danger and blasphemy; and the special gift of love, which is more precious than knowledge, more glorious than prophecy, and which surpasses all other spiritual gifts.<sup>389</sup>

From the time of the Apostles the Church has believed and taught that Jesus appointed Peter to be His Prime Minister, to be the first Pope and that this office of Pope was to be handed on to Peter's successors until the end of time. Likewise the office of Bishop held by the Apostles was to be handed on to other worthy men until the end of time. In this way by the offices of Pope and bishop Christ Himself would rule, guide, guard and teach the Church until His second coming.

In response to the belief that if a doctrine or devotion cannot be found explicitly in the Bible it ought not to be held or practiced, we have demonstrated the Bible alone is not the Word of God or the sole rule of faith. We have seen that Sacred Scripture and Tradition make up the single sacred deposit of the Word of God, that Tradition hands it

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<sup>388</sup> Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians, found in *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, Jurgens, Willam A., Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN, 1970, Vol. 1, page 10.

<sup>389</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies IV, XXXIII, 8*.

on in its full purity and that the task of interpreting the Word authentically has been entrusted by Christ to the Apostles and to their successors, that is the Pope and the Bishops in union with him that make up the Magisterium of the Church. Thus, through the presentation of the history of the devotion to Jesus through Mary in Part I we were able to see that it is firmly rooted in the spiritual Tradition of the Church. Through the presentation of Pope John Paul II's thought in *Redemptoris Mater* we were able to see how faithful to Scripture it is and how it is accepted and promoted by the teaching authority of the Church. Therefore the devotion to Jesus through Mary is wholly in line with the Word of God as understood in its fullness.

At this point we will move to the second reason for misunderstanding concerning the devotion to Jesus through Mary, namely, the confusion concerning Mary's role in the saving work of Christ which is rooted in a general lack of understanding of the entire economy of salvation. At the heart of this is the denial that, supported by God's grace, human beings can cooperate in the work of salvation. Since the devotion to Jesus through Mary rests on the theological foundation of Mary's maternal cooperation in the redemptive work of Christ, we must begin with this question regarding the nature of all human cooperation in divine action. We will see that the differences in the Catholic and Protestant understanding of human cooperation, and thus, of Mary's role, arise from the differences in their understanding of human nature. Catholic anthropology is derived from and in accord with a fully authentic Christology, while Protestant flaws in regard to human nature result from flaws in their Christological foundation. If we begin with a correct doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, as articulated at the Council of Chalcedon and at Constantinople III, we arrive at a correct understanding of human

nature, of human cooperation in divine activity, and of Mary's collaboration in the work of Christ.<sup>390</sup>

## Chapter Two: Christology and Anthropology

### I. A Common Christology

In general, Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants adhere to the teaching concerning Christ defined at the council of Chalcedon in 451. Chalcedon is, then, a strong foundation upon which to begin a discussion of the role of Mary based on the accepted doctrine of Christ. Against those who taught that the human nature of Christ ceased to exist when the divine Person of God's Son assumed it, the fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon, confessed that the Son assumed a human nature like ours in every way except sin:

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<sup>390</sup> I am aware of the great work that has been accomplished in the ecumenical dialogue with regard to the issue of Justification by faith and the role of human cooperation in salvation. Some of the critical documents on this subject are: The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Erdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000; U.S. Lutheran –Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Justification by Faith*, Origins, Vol. 13, October 6, 1983; Anderson, George, Stafford, Francis J., Burgess, Joseph, ed., *The One Mediator, The Saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue No. VIII*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, MN, 1992. On page 151 and 153 I attempt to articulate the Catholic position that human cooperation in the work of salvation does not arise from inherent human abilities but is itself a gift of God's grace. In order to guard against slipping into Pelagianism it must be made clear that all human cooperation in divine activity is an effect of God's grace. The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* cited above states this point: "We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true that: When Catholics say that persons "cooperate" in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities." *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* articles 19 and 20. To further clarify this point this same document cites the *Evaluation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Study 'Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?'* Vatican, 1992, no. 22, as stating: Where, however, Lutheran teaching construes the relationship of God to his human creatures in justification with such emphasis on the divine "monergism" or the sole efficacy of Christ in such a way that the person's willing acceptance of God's grace – which is itself a gift of God – has no essential role in justification, then the Tridentine canons 4, 5, 6 and 9 still constitute a notable doctrinal difference on justification."

Following the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father as to his divinity and consubstantial with us as to his humanity, "like ours in all things but sin." He was begotten from the Father before all ages as to his divinity and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, was born as to his humanity of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person and one hypostasis.<sup>391</sup>

A little over two centuries later, the sixth ecumenical council (Constantinople III, 681) confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but cooperate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to His Father all that He had decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation.<sup>392</sup> Constantinople III simply affirmed the teaching of Chalcedon that Christ had a full human nature with a human intellect and will as well as the divine intellect and will, united in one Person. In applying this teaching to the question of the activity of Christ's human will, Constantinople III taught that Christ possesses two wills cooperating in perfect unity. The human will of Christ was not passive or inactive in relation to His divine will. In fact, the humanity of Christ cooperated freely with His divinity for our salvation. To deny the active cooperation of the humanity of Christ with His divinity would be to fall into the error of monothelism, a heresy of the seventh century, which failed to acknowledge the free activity of the human will in cooperation with the divine will in Christ. The error of monophysitism, which

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<sup>391</sup> Council of Chalcedon (451), as found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 467.

<sup>392</sup> Council of Constantinople III (681), as found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 475.

sought to suppress or deny the full human nature of Christ, has its roots in the same flawed Christology.

## II. Divergent Anthropologies

The Christology articulated at these early councils is of vital importance in developing an anthropology that is consistent with the cooperation of Mary in the work of Christ. The doctrine of the Incarnation demonstrates that human nature plays an active and willed part in the work of salvation, though the 'first cause' effecting that salvation is from God. We come to a very noble view of human nature when we understand that God willed to work through our humanity as a secondary cause which with true freedom entered into the divine plan.

Based on the doctrine of the Person of Christ the Catholic Church teaches the human person is created in the image of God with intelligence and freedom and called to communion with Him.<sup>393</sup> Through sin our human nature has been wounded in the natural powers proper to it. The human intellect, the power to know God, has been darkened and the will, the power to love God, has been weakened. Therefore God's revelation and grace are necessary to know and love Him.<sup>394</sup> As a result of our wounded nature we are inclined to evil, subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death, yet human nature has not been totally corrupted.<sup>395</sup> Even after the fall mankind remains inherently good. Though we lost the likeness of God, that is, the gift of His indwelling Spirit, we retained His image, as intelligent and free creatures with a capacity for acts by which union with

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<sup>393</sup> Vatican Council II document, *Gaudium et spes* 17.

<sup>394</sup> Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 561, DS 3875.

<sup>395</sup> Vatican Council II document, *Gaudium et spes* 13.

God can be attained.<sup>396</sup> Mankind remains capable of receiving the gift of divine life in spite of sin and we retain the call to a communion of love with Him. Since love demands a free response, even after the fall human nature remains free.<sup>397</sup>

In the Incarnation God has once again announced that His creation is "good." In the Incarnation humanity is taken up definitively into the inner life of the Trinity by the Hypostatic union and creation is brought into the redemptive mission of the Son. Human nature has been raised to a participation in the divine nature, the end for which God initially created us, and to cooperation in the redemptive mission of Christ. Thus, once we have reached a correct understanding of the Incarnation we may gain an authentic view of human nature and human cooperation in the divine activity.

That God has willed the cooperation of humanity in the work of redemption is clearly expressed by the Councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople III. The majority of modern Christian communities accept these councils. Though agreeing with Chalcedon that Christ possessed two natures, divine and human, the Reformers did not concede that His human nature cooperated freely with His divinity for our salvation as articulated at Constantinople.<sup>398</sup> Luther and Calvin adopted their flawed view of humanity reasoning from this incorrect Christology. The first reformers taught that original sin has radically perverted human nature and destroyed our freedom. Whereas the Catholic belief is that, in Christ, humanity has been raised to a participation in the divine nature and activity, the

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<sup>396</sup> CCC 705

<sup>397</sup> Vatican Council II document, *Dignitatis humanae* 10.

<sup>398</sup> In his commentary of 1535 on the Epistle to the Galatians, Luther places before his audience three things: Justification, God's Kingdom and Creation and then states that these are the work of God alone, without any cooperation from the humanity of Christ. Cf. *Ut unica causa justificationis quae postea etiam tribuitur materiae propter formam, hoc est operi propter fidem. Ut regnum divinitatis traditur Christo homini non propter humanitatem sed propter divinitatem. Sola enim divinitas creavit omnia humanitate nihil*

Protestant denial of the fact that human nature has been healed and elevated results in the identification of Original sin with an insurmountable tendency to evil. The consequence for mankind is that our human nature has been totally corrupted and is subject to the complete bondage of sin. Therefore all man can do is sin. This radical perversion of mankind and the exclusive transcendence of God results in a gulf separating the divine and the human, making the one incapable of penetration and transformation by the other. God looks down on our fallen humanity in mercy and covers us with His saving grace. He offers this grace but all we can do is passively accept it by faith. The emphasis on the divine initiative and the belief in a human nature totally corrupted by sin that results in the destruction of freedom excludes the possibility of effective cooperation on the part of humanity in the work of salvation. These principles underlie the doctrine of justification by faith alone: If mankind is wholly corrupt and incapable of cooperating with God, salvation must be the work of God alone. This anthropology of the Reformers denies any role of cooperation to the humanity of Christ, Mary or the Church in the work of redemption.

### **Chapter Three: The Economy of Salvation**

#### **I. The Incarnation and the Economy of Salvation**

It is not only the understanding of human nature which flows from the Christological foundation, but a correct understanding of the entire economy of salvation. The root division among Christians is the denial that, supported by God's grace, human beings can cooperate in the work of salvation. This denial begins to occur when one loses

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cooperante. Weimar XL - I, 417, as found in Yves Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1957, p. 90.



sight of the truth that we are saved by the willed cooperation of the Sacred Humanity of Christ with His divinity. The natural effect of this error is then to minimize to the point of extinction human cooperation in the work of salvation by the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, and by Mary, his mother according to the flesh.<sup>399</sup>

Classical Lutheranism and Calvinism in the end deny the cooperation of Mary in the work of salvation based upon the opinion that the human nature of Christ contributed nothing to Redemption. Martin Luther believed in the two natures of Christ and held to the formula of Chalcedon. But the doctrine that became the framework of his theology was not the Chalcedonian formula. The internal law of Luther's theology was what may be called the "admirable exchange": God has taken upon Himself our weakness and sinfulness in order to give to us His justice.<sup>400</sup> But in this exchange our human nature is not healed, elevated and perfected.

For Luther the economy of salvation is not a mutual cooperation between God and man, but a transaction in which God takes the place of man, God substituting for man. In this exchange man is entirely passive, he does not and cannot cooperate with God in the work of redemption. This transaction leaves no place for the cooperation of the human nature of Christ in redemption nor for the cooperation of Mary or of the Church. The humanity of Christ is seen as a passive instrument of His divinity, the divinity taking sinfulness from his human nature and ascribing its justice to His humanity.

The Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation, as taught by the Councils at Chalcedon and Constantinople III, as well as the Catholic view of human nature is the basis of our

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<sup>399</sup> The connection between the denial of human cooperation and a flawed Christology is articulated in detail in a work by Yves Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1957.

understanding of the economy of salvation. The free cooperation of the sacred Humanity of Christ with His divinity represents the part humanity is given to play in the work of salvation. Mary and the members of His Mystical Body, the Church, are also invited and willed by God to freely cooperate with Him in His work. Mary cooperated freely with God by her total gift of self to the Person and the entire mission of the Redeemer. The Church continues to communicate to us the effects of salvation which flow from the Cross. Thus, a correct understanding of the Incarnation, and precisely the way in which the Sacred Humanity of Christ cooperates with His divinity, establishes the truth that God has willed the free cooperation of humanity in His saving work.

## **II. The Likeness of God and the Economy of Salvation**

It is not only the doctrine of the Incarnation but also the fact that humanity is made in the image of God that serves to confirm the understanding that God has willed the free cooperation of humanity in the work of redemption.<sup>401</sup> To bear the divine image is to possess a rational soul consisting of the powers of intelligence and free will. As an intelligent and free creature each person must journey toward his destiny by his free choice.<sup>402</sup> That is, the human person must be free to determine himself and cannot be determined by another, not even by God.<sup>403</sup> God, as sovereign Authority, has chosen to make mankind fully responsible for his actions and choices by giving him genuine authority over his own will. He has chosen not to determine the end of man, but to call him to free participation in the determination and pursuit of that end.

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<sup>400</sup> Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, p. 26-28.

<sup>401</sup> *Genesis 1:26; Colossians 1:15-20*

<sup>402</sup> CCC 311, cf. my section of this paper subtitled *The Anthropology of John Paul II*.

<sup>403</sup> Sirach 15:14, cf. Vatican Council II document *Gaudium et Spes* 17, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1730.

Not only must each human person journey toward this end by means of free choice, but God has willed that the world itself must be brought to the end for which it was created through the free cooperation of humanity. As the Church teaches:

God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' cooperation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan.<sup>404</sup>

Therefore, all men must freely cooperate with God to bring the world and one another to the end for which they were created. And that end is union with God.

God created the world good and with its own perfection, but He did not hand us the world in a state of completion. "The universe was created in a state of journeying toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it."<sup>405</sup> God guides the world toward completion and perfection and He accomplishes this by His gracious assistance, but in His wise and loving will He desires that His children should share in His work of bringing the world and one another to perfection. This is the work of the Father and it is also the work of His family.

In a family the one thing little children love to do more than anything is to share in whatever the family is doing. Whatever the project may be, children want to help. Through this they experience a great sense of meaning, purpose and belonging. They experience the dignity of identifying as children of their father and mother. God is our Father, and in His generosity He invites us to help, to cooperate with Him in His great work of bringing creation and redemption to completion. We do not consider this a

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<sup>404</sup> CCC 306

<sup>405</sup> CCC 302

weakness in God. Rather, it proclaims His wisdom and goodness. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* expresses this point:

To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of “subduing” the earth (Genesis 1:26-28) and having dominion over it. God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. Though, often unconscious collaborators with God’s will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers, and their sufferings. They then fully become “God’s fellow workers” and co-workers for his kingdom. (Col. 1:24; 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Thess 3:2; Col. 4:11)<sup>406</sup>

God does not need our cooperation for His sake. He wills our cooperation for our sake. The Father desires not only to call us His children, but to really make us His children. God wants to make us like Himself. He wants us to become like Jesus, therefore He wants us to share in all He does that by means of participating in His work and suffering we may become like Him. He desires our transformation in grace, to mature as His children into the full stature of Christ. It is this process of participating in the work of God and the action of grace that results in our transformation. He does not need our cooperation; we need it to grow in His grace and likeness.

There are two points in regard to salvation that must always be kept in balance. First, in the cooperation of mankind with God, divine grace is the necessary precondition for all such right action. Apart from God we can do nothing except what God gives us the power to do. As the Church states:

The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Phil 2:13; 1 Cor 12:6) Far from diminishing the creature’s dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God’s power, wisdom, and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from God, for “without a Creator

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<sup>406</sup> CCC 307

the creature vanishes.” Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God’s grace.<sup>407</sup>

Second, as St. Augustine has written, though God has created man without his help He will not save man without his help. In other words, God’s free initiative demands our free response, for God has created us in his image by conferring on humanity freedom as well as the power to know him. As the Church teaches, “The soul only enters freely into the communion of love.”<sup>408</sup> The dignity of the human person then, rests in being made in the image of God. Retaining this image even after the fall His children have the great dignity of cooperating with Him, each according to his or her role in the family, for one’s own salvation and the salvation of others. Yves Congar says that it is precisely this point that Calvinist theologian Karl Barth and his followers find unacceptable in Catholicism.

Yet the Catholic witness, to which East and West alike bear testimony, is that God has given to his rational creation the privilege of cooperating with him, each individual in accordance with the place he has been called to occupy in the economy of salvation. This belief is of the very essence of the teaching of that 'undivided Church' so often the subject of discussion in ecumenical circles. To be created in God's image is in effect to be made his partner, as Eve was of Adam; to be subject to him and in some degree a sharer in his work. Moreover, if by God's will a person were made his partner, not only in the work of his own salvation, but in that of others also, then to be made in God's image would involve for that soul a collective cooperation which might even be universal in its scope. Clearly this was so in the case of our Lady.<sup>409</sup>

## **Chapter Four: Christ the One Mediator and Human Cooperation**

### **I. The Mediation of Christ**

The Catholic theology of mediation follows from this distinctively Catholic understanding of the role of human cooperation in the economy of salvation. Jesus Christ is the one and only mediator between God and mankind, "For there is one God, and there

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<sup>407</sup> CCC 308; cf. John 15:5.

is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all."<sup>410</sup> St. Thomas, speaking of the one mediation of Christ says, "It pertains to the office of a mediator between God and men to unite them."<sup>411</sup> The office of mediator belongs fully to Jesus. He is the one mediator with the Father by the fact of the Hypostatic union, joining in one person the two natures that needed to be reconciled: the divine nature, which He has in common with the Father, and a human nature, which He shares with us. He alone could reconcile man to God by offering the Father, on behalf of men, the infinite act of love, the infinite gift of self. The sacrifice of the Cross would merit in strict justice the grace of salvation for all mankind.<sup>412</sup> Only He could impart to mankind a share in His divine life, making us children of the Father through His Sacred Humanity, which is the channel of grace from God to mankind. Christ continues His mediation and intercession always, inasmuch as it is in Him that we have access to the Father in the Spirit. Christ is the perfect mediator. Still, others may participate in His one mediation by cooperating with Him so that all mankind may be united fully to Christ. St. Thomas says, "However, nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively or ministerially."<sup>413</sup>

## **II. Human Cooperation in the One Mediation of Christ**

Creation and Redemption are, first and foremost, the work of God carried out by His will and power. He does not *need* our cooperation, yet, as we established above, He

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<sup>408</sup> CCC 2002

<sup>409</sup> Congar, Yves, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church*, The Newman Press, Maryland, 1957, p. 17.

<sup>410</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>411</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q.26, a.1

<sup>412</sup> *Summa* III, q. 26, a. 2

*wills* our cooperation. When we speak of mediation in regard to creatures we speak of *cooperation* or *participation* with God in His work. Grace makes this human cooperation possible. Though God wants His children to cooperate with Him to bring creation and redemption to completion, our cooperation is never equal to His. Our cooperation depends absolutely upon Him. We need not fear that our participation in His work detracts in any way from His sovereignty or glory since our cooperation with God is necessarily subordinate to and dependent upon His power.

Though humanity is fallen, we retain our freedom. Consequently we can and must collaborate with God's grace to reach union with Him. As a human community we are bid to concern ourselves with others. We may cooperate with God for our good and the good of others in a variety of ways. But often we are separated from one another physically, especially through death. Yet even physical separation does not extinguish our ability to help one another. It is then that we cooperate with God for the good of others through the prayer of intercession and petition. In this way we offer our prayer, work, joy and suffering to Christ as a way of interceding with the Father to give His grace and the help that is needed or to better dispose ourselves and others to receive the gifts God wants to give for our transformation. The solidarity of mankind in Christ lays the foundation for helping others.

We may come to a better understanding of the role of human cooperation by way of a better understanding of prayer. When we pray we do not seek to change God's mind so that we can get what we want. We pray seeking our own transformation. We must be conformed to God's will rather than seeking to conform God to our will. Therefore we

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<sup>413</sup> *Summa* III, q. 26, a. 1

pray for ourselves and for others to be disposed to receive God's grace to know His will and to receive the grace to do His will. In this way we are conformed to God and reach our goal of union with Him. We may also ask one another to help us in this quest. The prayer of intercession has the effect of disposing and inspiring us to know and do His will.

Though God knows our needs before we ask, He requires that we employ our free will to ask for His help, He requires our cooperation. Then by coming to know His will and following Him in obedience we grow in His image. He has established an economy of salvation in which "you have not because you do not ask," and in which the prayers of the faithful are the ordained and effective means of grace. We may fail to ask or we may fail to know and do His will. Consequently, there is a distance, a gap between our need for change and God's transforming power. As a result, our needs and His power remain disconnected. For this reason the weakness of the individual may be helped by the intercession of the community.

### **III. The Communion of Saints**

Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and mankind. Since He has united mankind to Himself in His Body He makes our prayer accessible to the Father. Consequently we pray in Him, with Him and through Him to the Father. We should not pray to Mary or the saints as if they were the ultimate end of our prayer. Mary and the saints are not divine, they are human persons. Therefore they could never be the source of all the good we seek in prayer. God is the ultimate end of all our prayer. Consequently all



prayer is addressed and directed to the Father as the end, goal or terminus of prayer and no one can pray except by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>414</sup>

Some may struggle with the idea of praying to the saints because they see within the idea of praying to another the concept of adoration. It is assumed that we only pray to someone we believe to be God. In this sense we do not pray to the saints or worship them. When we pray to Mary or the saints, what we really mean is to invoke them. The word invoke comes from the Latin *invocare*, to call on another.<sup>415</sup> To invoke another is to call on them for help, protection or support. When we pray to the saints we ask or invoke them to pray for us to Christ and to help us to know and do His will.

It is right and good to ask others to pray for us, whether they are on earth or in heaven. Paul invokes those to whom he is writing to pray for him.<sup>416</sup> Now if it is good to ask a person on earth to pray for us, how much better is it to ask those who share an even greater intimacy with Christ in heaven. Those who are in heaven are not dead but alive in Christ; they are not separated from us by an insurmountable wall. By the indwelling Holy Spirit the faithful on earth and in heaven have been united in the Mystical Body of Christ. We are all one in Christ. As Paul says in Romans 12:4-5, "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

The reformers accepted the fact that the angels and saints in heaven can and do pray for the Church but they insisted that we cannot *invoke* Mary, the saints or the angels.

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<sup>414</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:3, cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2680.

<sup>415</sup> *Webster's New Ideal Dictionary*, G & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, MS, 1978.

<sup>416</sup> Col. 4:3; 1 Th. 3:10; 5:25; 2 Th. 3:1; Heb. 13:18.

By invoking Mary and the saints they thought we made them the recipients of prayer and intermediaries between the faithful and God. Consequently, the reformers admit that the communion of saints exists, but only as a communion of praise, nothing more. In the Apology of the Confession of Augsburg, chapter 8, in a paragraph on the invocation of saints, Melancton writes,

We will make a concession: the angels pray for us. In the book of Zecariah 1:12, we read that the angel addresses this prayer to God, "O Lord of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation those seventy years?" As for the saints, we concede this: Just as the living pray for the universal Church in general; so too those who are in heaven pray for the whole Church. However, Scripture offers us no evidence of the prayer of the dead for those living except for 1 Mc 12:15-16.<sup>417</sup>

Though he admits to the prayer of those in heaven, Melancton goes on to state that we cannot invoke Mary or the saints or seek help from them. "There is but one sole Redeemer and Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, who is the unique sovereign sacrificer, propitiator and advocate before God."<sup>418</sup> All comes from the sole grace of Christ alone, the unique Mediator. The problem for the reformers concerning the invocation of Mary is threefold. They reject the possibility of cooperation by fallen humanity with God in His work of salvation. They reject the principle that we may participate in the one-mediation of Christ in a secondary and subordinate way without making ourselves "other mediators" who usurp the unique mediation of Christ. These objections were discussed and answered in the previous section. There is another reason for the Reformer's denial of the invocation of saints. This is the failure to understand in its fullness the communion of saints, the common union between Christ and all the faithful

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<sup>417</sup> Melancton, *Apologia of the Confession of Augsburg*, chapter 8, found in Laurentin, Rene, *Mary in the Prayer of the Church* IMRI Course text, Summer 2000, p. 80 -81.

in His Body, and the benefits of this communion. It is necessary to understand this intimate living communion between Christ and His members, whether they are in heaven, in purgatory or on earth, in order to understand Mary's place in our prayer to the Father and the Son.

From the beginning Jesus associated His disciples with his life and gave them a share in His mission, joy and sufferings.<sup>419</sup> At the Last Supper Jesus spoke of a still more intimate union between Him and those who would follow Him. He said, "Abide in me and I in you ... I am the vine, you are the branches."<sup>420</sup> Jesus promised a real communion between His own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him."<sup>421</sup> When His visible presence was taken away from the Apostles, Jesus did not leave them orphans. To remain with them always He sent His Spirit and as a result union with Jesus has become even more intense. By giving His Spirit to all those who believe and are baptized Jesus established His mystical Body.<sup>422</sup>

Scripture describes the Church as united in Christ as one Body. Paul says, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit... If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."<sup>423</sup> By the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit we are taken up into communion with Christ and

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<sup>418</sup> *Apology for the Augsburg Confession*, article 21, found in Laurentin, Rene, *Mary in the Prayer of the Church* IMRI Course text, Summer 2000, p. 81.

<sup>419</sup> Cf. Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19; Mt 13:10-17; Lk 10:17-20; 22:28-30.

<sup>420</sup> John 15:4-5.

<sup>421</sup> John 6:56, cf. CCC 787

<sup>422</sup> CCC 788

<sup>423</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12 -13:26.

with one another. In union with Him we begin to share in His divine sonship and in His mission.<sup>424</sup>

Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator between God and man. However, by assuming humanity in the Incarnation He has opened His unique mediation to all mankind that we might cooperate with Him in His work of Redemption.<sup>425</sup> The Crucifixion is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the one mediator. But because Christ has in some way united himself to every person in the Incarnation, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery is offered to all."<sup>426</sup> Jesus calls His disciples to take up the Cross and follow Him,<sup>427</sup> for "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example so that we should follow in his footsteps."<sup>428</sup> The Church teaches that "In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering."<sup>429</sup>

Though all of mankind is called to cooperation in union with Christ for the good of others, God has given Mary a singular and unique role in His saving plan. The one Mediator Jesus Christ was to have a "generous associate." God called Mary to become the Mother of the Christ, and the Mother of His Mystical Body, the Church. As the Second Vatican Council stated:

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<sup>424</sup> John 1:12

<sup>425</sup> Apostolic Letter of John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, 19, 24

<sup>426</sup> *Gaudium et spes* 22

<sup>427</sup> Matthew 16:24

<sup>428</sup> 1 Peter 2:21

<sup>429</sup> CCC 618

Above all others and in a singular way (Mary was to be) the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ; she presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.<sup>430</sup>

And,

The Son whom she brought forth is He whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, namely the faithful, in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love.<sup>431</sup>

By the power of the Holy Spirit Mary cooperated with God to give life to Jesus Christ in the Incarnation and then to educate and form Him as He grew to maturity. At the Cross Mary cooperated with Christ to give life to His Mystical Body, the Church. For this reason she is our mother in the order of grace. As our Mother, she continues to care for her Son, in His Mystical Body, by cooperating with the Holy Spirit to educate and form the members of His Body in His likeness. She does this through her prayer. In chapter five we will see that this has been the constant teaching of the Church as it is seen in the witness of the early Fathers.

## **Chapter Five: Mary in the One Mediation of Christ**

### **I. The Church's Teaching on Mary's Cooperation**

The Church has taught the faithful from the beginning that Mary cooperated with Christ in a unique way for the salvation of the world and that she continues from heaven to cooperate with God through her maternal intercession for the salvation of all mankind. In their writings the Fathers bear witness to the apostolic teaching handed down orally and in writing. St. Basil explains the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the

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<sup>430</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 61

writings of the Fathers in this way: the written Tradition is found in Sacred Scripture; the unwritten or oral Tradition is written down but not in Sacred Scripture, it is the fruit of the teaching of the Apostles and their successors who are the Fathers of the Church. The Fathers are the witnesses of the teaching of the apostles. They bear witness to this body of teaching in their own writings. In the minds of the Fathers there was only one body of Christian teaching, whether it was written in the books of the Old Testament, the New Testament or taught and handed down orally and in writing by the Apostles and their immediate successors. St. Athanasius, writing around the year 336 explains the relationship between the Apostolic teaching and the witness of the Fathers: “The Lord taught; the Apostles preached; the Fathers have kept.”<sup>432</sup>

Eve, the first Mother of the Living was associated in an active and responsible way with Adam in the fall of mankind. According to a number of the early Fathers, Mary is the “New Eve,” the new Mother of the Living, associated in an active and responsible way with Christ, the “New Adam” in His work of Redemption, though in a secondary and subordinate way. Here we will look at a number of examples of this teaching from the early Fathers up until the point of St. Augustine. We will go no further than the fifth century since it was the purpose of chapter one in Part I to cover the history from the sixth century to the present. In Genesis 3:15, the seed of the woman who crushes the head of the serpent is Jesus Christ. Therefore, the mother of the seed is Mary, the woman with the Redeemer. St. Justin Martyr writing before the year 165 says:

[The Son of God] became man through a Virgin, so that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same way it had begun. For Eve, who was virgin and undefiled, gave birth to disobedience and death after listening to

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<sup>431</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 63

<sup>432</sup> 28, PG 26, 593 D.

the serpent's words. But the Virgin Mary conceived faith and joy; for when the angel Gabriel brought her glad tidings that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that the power of the Most High would overshadow her, so that the Holy One born of her would be the Son of God, she answered, "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Thus was born of her the [Child] about whom so many Scriptures speak, as we have shown. Through him, God crushed the serpent, along with those angels and men who had become like the serpent.<sup>433</sup>

Justin's witness to Mary's active role in union with Christ in His work of redemption is important for this reason: his intention is not to present his own unique teaching. He seeks only to hand on the Christian faith as the Apostles taught it.

St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, writing between 180 and 202 is a strong witness to the Apostolic teaching concerning Mary's role of intercession and mediation. He received his teaching from St. Polycarp who was a direct disciple of John the Apostle. Irenaeus was also in contact with other Christians who had been taught by the Apostles first hand. Based on the Apostolic Tradition Irenaeus sees Mary as the new Eve, the new Mother of the Living who cooperates with Christ in restoring grace to the human family. He writes:

Just as Eve, wife of Adam, yet still a virgin, became by her disobedience the cause of death for herself and the whole human race, so Mary, too, espoused yet a virgin, became by her obedience the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race. And so it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by Mary's obedience. For what the virgin Eve bound fast by her refusal to believe, this the Virgin Mary unbound by her belief.<sup>434</sup>

According to Irenaeus, just as there was a woman associated with Adam in the fall, God willed there would be a woman associated with Jesus, the "New Adam" in his work of Redemption. The Lord received his human nature from the Virgin Mary because the work of Redemption had to be achieved within the same human race. Irenaeus, in his great theme of "Recirculation" understands that salvation, fulfilled by Jesus Christ, must

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<sup>433</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho* 100; PG 6, 709-12

<sup>434</sup> *Adv Haer* 3, pg 32, I; PG 7, 958-959

be accomplished step by step, though in the reverse way to that of the Fall. Mary, therefore, cooperates with Christ in the work of salvation, in subordination and dependence upon the essential work of the one Mediator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. For the early Fathers Mary's role was not limited to a biological role as a mother. Mary was not a mere passive instrument for the Incarnation. Mary had a free, conscious, active and responsible cooperation in the redemptive work of Christ. God associated her with Himself freely and consciously in his work of Redemption. Though not all would agree St. Irenaeus intends so much in his writing, John Paul in a general audience given September 18, 1996 says,

Mary carries out her dedication to Jesus "under him," that is, in a condition of subordination, which is the fruit of grace. However, this is true cooperation, because it is realized "with him," and beginning with the annunciation, it involves active participation in the work of redemption. "Rightly, therefore," the Second Vatican Council observed, "the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."<sup>435</sup>

St. Ambrose (340-397) continues to hand on the same apostolic teaching in the fourth century: "It was through a man and woman that flesh was cast from Paradise; it was through a virgin that flesh was linked to God...Eve is called mother of the human race, but Mary Mother of Salvation."<sup>436</sup> In the fifth century, St Jerome (340-420) summarizes the teaching of the early Church on Mary's mission of cooperating with Christ in the work of Redemption, "Death through Eve, life through Mary."<sup>437</sup> Later,

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<sup>435</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos*, p. 138.

<sup>436</sup> Epist 63, n.33, PL16, 1249-1250; Sermon 45, n.4; PL, 17, 716

<sup>437</sup> Epist. 22, n.21, PL 22, 408



St. Augustine (354-430) states, “Mary is clearly the mother of the members of Christ, that is, of ourselves. For it is by her work of love that men have been born in the Church, faithful men who are the body of the head, whose mother she was in the flesh.”<sup>438</sup>

Augustine and the Fathers before him taught that Mary’s role as our mother flows from her union with Christ and from our union with Him as His Mystical Body. Mary is associated with Christ in his work of Redemption in a singular and unique way beginning with her free and conscious cooperation with God through her “Yes” at the invitation of the angel to become the Mother of the Redeemer. Mary’s union with her Son in his total offering to the Father continued to the cross where she was united to His suffering and death. Yet with the Resurrection, Mary’s union and cooperation with Her Son does not cease. Her Son extends her maternal cooperation with Him to the motherhood of the Church, His Mystical Body, by giving her to his disciples as a mother: “Woman, behold your son.”<sup>439</sup>

Christ became the father of the human race by His death on the cross that gives new life to all those who receive Him. Mary was united with Him in this work. Because of her continuous union with Him from His conception, throughout His life and at the cross, Christ gives Mary as a mother to his disciples - to all those who receive the new life of Christ that flows from the cross. He is the new Adam that gives life to the world and Mary is given to us as the new Eve - the new Mother of the Living - of all those who receive the life that flows from the side of the new Adam.

As early as the end of the first century and to the middle of the second century there is recorded an historical witness to early Christian devotion to Mary’s intercession

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<sup>438</sup> Augustine De S. Virginitate, 6:PL 40, 399

and maternal mediation depicted in the Roman catacombs. Here one finds the image of Mary on the large central vaults and present on tombs. The catacombs of St. Agnes bear murals of Mary situated between St. Peter and St. Paul with her arms outstretched to both. When St. Peter and St. Paul are shown together it is symbolic of the Church. Mary is depicted with arms outstretched as the “orans”, the woman of prayer. Already it was understood that Mary prays for the Church, her children. This is one of the earliest symbols of Mary’s maternal care for the Church. It is clear from these that the early Christian community recognized Mary as having a role in the Church. They sought her maternal care, protection and intercession from heaven. Therefore, already, at this early stage in Christianity we find a great historical witness to Mary’s role as spiritual mother and intercessor in the Christian community.<sup>440</sup>

Patronage was an important concept in Roman law where the weak and the poor placed themselves under the protection and care of the rich and powerful to ensure the safety of their families and to provide for the necessities in life. The client would vow himself to the service of the patron and the patron would place him under his care. St. Ambrose of Milan referred to St. Gervase and St. Protase as the “patrons” of his Church; Pope St. Leo the Great gave the same title of patron to Peter and Paul for the Church in Rome.<sup>441</sup> In the early Church people were surrounded in everyday life with the reality of the powerful taking care of the weak. The Church viewed the saints and martyrs as their patrons from heaven. Therefore, it is not a great stretch to see Mary, the Mother of God,

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<sup>439</sup> John 19:26-27

<sup>440</sup> Cf. Murphy, “Origin and Nature of Marian Cult” in Carol, *Mariology*, Vol. 3. (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1961, p. 1-20.

<sup>441</sup> J. A. Jungmann, *Liturgical Heritage and Pastoral Actuality*, Rome, 1962; found in Fr. R. Laurentin, *The Meaning of Consecration Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, 1991, p. 111.

as a “Patron,” as one in whom we can place our entire lives, all our needs, and all petitions, in order to receive the fullness of her maternal assistance.

In the first three centuries of Christianity the expression, “to Jesus through Mary” was not yet coined. But the belief, if only in seed form, of placing oneself into the hands of Mary in order to receive her maternal assistance and protection, can be seen in the ancient prayer “Sub Tuum Praesidium” or “Under Your Protection”. This prayer, originating in Egypt, is dated as early as 250 A.D. or, at the latest, the 300’s<sup>442</sup>: “We fly to your patronage, O Holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all danger, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin.”

The “Sub Tuum Praesidium” reflects an apostolic tradition much older than the third Century. It does not call Mary “our mother” but it is certainly the equivalent of a child turning to its mother with confidence. From this standpoint we can say that the ancient prayer “Under Your Protection”, in seed form, bears witness to the devotion to Mary that would develop in later centuries in St. Louis de Montfort to giving oneself entirely to Jesus Christ through the hands of Mary.

## **II. The Foundations of Mary’s Cooperation in the One Mediation of Christ**

### **A. Jesus gives Himself through the maternal presence of Mary**

Calling to mind all that we have said concerning God’s economy of salvation and the role of human cooperation in that plan, let us now apply these principles to Mary to understand her role in that redemptive economy. John Paul II understands the fundamental event in the economy of salvation to be the Incarnation of the Word at the

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<sup>442</sup> Michael O’Carroll, C.S.Sp., *Theotokos*, Michael Glazier, Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1982, p.336.

moment of the Annunciation.<sup>443</sup> In the Incarnation, Jesus entrusted Himself totally to Mary as her Son, to depend on her as any child depends upon its mother. According to John Paul, "Before anyone else it was God himself, the Eternal Father, who entrusted himself to the Virgin of Nazareth, giving her his own Son in the mystery of the Incarnation."<sup>444</sup> Mary responded to this marvelous gift of God with faith and entrusted herself to Him without reserve, devoting herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son. Thus, Mary cooperated with God through faith to give Life to the world by giving life to Jesus. Then as His mother she educated and formed Him as He grew to maturity. Therefore, through the Incarnation we see that God's life comes to humanity through His free gift and the maternal presence and cooperation of Mary. In this way the Incarnation is the prototype of the way God will always bring His divine life to the world.

At the time of the visitation Elizabeth cried out, "Blessed is she who believed." Mary is blessed because it was through her faith, her total gift of self, that the world received the Incarnation of Christ. Yet, John Paul says, "this blessing reaches its full meaning when Mary stands beneath the Cross of her Son."<sup>445</sup> At the Cross Mary is united "through faith -- the same faith with which she had received the angel's revelation at the Annunciation"<sup>446</sup> to the redemptive love of Jesus. The source of the world's salvation is the self-emptying love of Christ upon the Cross, but not the love of Christ alone. God wished to have a generous associate in His work of redemption. Therefore, just as in the Incarnation, Mary cooperated with Jesus at the Cross, uniting her total gift of self to that

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<sup>443</sup> RM 39

<sup>444</sup> RM 39

<sup>445</sup> RM 18

of His. This union of Jesus and Mary gained the life of grace for the world. Christ's total gift of self, united to the maternal compassion of Mary at the Cross, resulted in the conception of all those who would receive His life in the Church. Thus there is a correspondence between the conception of Christ in the Incarnation and the conception of His Mystical Body at the Cross. Jesus bears witness to this correspondence when He proclaims the continuation of her motherhood in the Church by entrusting John to Mary and Mary to John.<sup>447</sup> The Church then, that is conceived at the Cross as the fruit of the redemptive love of Jesus and the maternal love of Mary, is given birth at Pentecost. And there we see Mary with her infant Church. The Pope states:

After the events of the Resurrection and Ascension, Mary entered the Upper Room together with the Apostles to await Pentecost, and was present there as the Mother of the glorified Lord. She was not only the one who "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and loyally persevered in her union with her Son "unto the Cross" but she was also the "handmaid of the Lord," left by her Son as Mother in the midst of the infant Church: "Behold your mother." Thus there began to develop a special bond between this Mother and the Church. For the infant Church was the fruit of the Cross and Resurrection of her Son.<sup>448</sup>

John Paul says, at Pentecost, "we see Mary prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation."<sup>449</sup> At Pentecost Mary cooperates with the Holy Spirit through her intercession to bring about the birth of the Church. Thus, in God's saving design there is a unique correspondence between the conception and birth of Jesus and the conception and birth of the Church. John Paul speaks of the significance of the correspondence between these two events:

In the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> John 19:25-27

<sup>448</sup> RM 40

<sup>449</sup> RM 24

the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: Mary at Nazareth and Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the "path of birth from the Holy Spirit." Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit -- present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church too she continues to be a maternal presence, as is shown by the words spoken from the Cross: "Woman, behold your son!"; "Behold, your mother."<sup>450</sup>

Through the events of the Incarnation, the Cross and Pentecost, we see that God has given His life through the maternal presence and cooperation of Mary. In each event Mary is the mother present as the "path of birth from the Holy Spirit."<sup>451</sup>

### **B. Our return to Jesus through the maternal presence of Mary**

To tie this in with the topic of our study, we could say that to live the devotion "to Jesus through Mary" means to follow the pattern established by the Incarnation. Jesus entrusted Himself totally to Mary in the Incarnation, to depend upon her as any child depends upon its mother. As her Son, Jesus loved, honored and served Mary obediently with a total confidence and trust in her. The Gospel tells us "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them."<sup>452</sup> Mary cooperated with the Holy Spirit to give human life to Jesus. As His Mother she continued to cooperate with the Holy Spirit after His birth to educate and form Him as He grew in wisdom and years.<sup>453</sup>

As Christians our vocation is not only to be united with Christ but to be fully conformed to Him. To accomplish this He gives the gift of Himself to us in Baptism. Then, by grace, the mystery of the Incarnation, so to speak, begins to unfold in our

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<sup>450</sup> RM 24

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Luke 2:51

<sup>453</sup> Luke 2:52.

individual lives as Jesus begins to live in us and through us. As Paul says, "It is not I who live but Christ who lives in me."<sup>454</sup> As the mystery of the Incarnation unfolds in our lives Mary is present as our Mother. Recognizing the economy of salvation established by the Incarnation we entrust ourselves to Mary in imitation of Christ. Then through her maternal influence she will educate and form us in His likeness. The more we are conformed to Jesus the more we grow in union with Him. In this way we go to Jesus through Mary just as He came to us in the Incarnation.

How does Mary cooperate with the Holy Spirit to form the faithful in the image of Christ? She cooperates through her intercession to dispose and inspire us to know His will and to receive the grace to do His will that we might experience the saving power of God. As the Church teaches, "Because she gives us Jesus, her Son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: 'Let it be to me according to your word.' By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."<sup>455</sup> Jesus is the Way, but by entrusting ourselves and all our cares and petitions to Mary with great confidence she becomes, according to the traditional iconography of the East, the *Hodigitria*, she who "shows the way" and is herself "the Sign" of the Way.<sup>456</sup> By entrusting ourselves to her we hear her say to us. "Do whatever He tells you." Under her maternal influence we are disposed to know Christ's will and to live it fully.

In light of the pattern of the Incarnation we see that Mary is not a bridge to Christ. The Second Vatican Council made it a point to state that the salutary influence of the

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<sup>454</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>455</sup> CCC 2677

<sup>456</sup> CCC 2674

Blessed Virgin does not “impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ.”<sup>457</sup> Christ bridges the distance between God and man in Himself. Through grace given by the indwelling Holy Spirit we live in Christ and He lives in us. Mary does not stand between Christ and the faithful blocking our immediate access to Him. We must not think in a linear or spatial manner. We must rid ourselves of the image in which Mary stands between Christ and the believer so that we have to go to Mary and Mary goes to Christ but we are not allowed entrance because of our unworthiness. Mary is not a bridge. She is a Mother helping her children to become more like her firstborn Son. She is there to help unite us to her Son, by cooperating with the Holy Spirit to make us more like Him, not to keep us away from Him.

Finally, according to the plan of the Incarnation, Jesus is the model we are to imitate. He is the first to live in a filial relationship with Mary. Consequently, Jesus is the first to live this devotion toward her. Christ then is the foundation of devotion to Mary, “For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”<sup>458</sup> Reflecting on this we come to understand devotion to Mary as the lived relationship between Jesus and Mary. If we as Christians are called to imitate Christ so that we may be conformed to Him in everything, then we too should honor Mary with filial devotion and entrust ourselves to her maternal care. The Second Vatican Council Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People encouraged everyone to embrace a filial relationship with Mary stating, “Every one should have a genuine devotion to her and entrust his life to her motherly care.”<sup>459</sup> By living in imitation of Jesus, we entrust

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<sup>457</sup> *Lumen Gentium* 60

<sup>458</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:11

<sup>459</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4



ourselves to Mary as Jesus did in the Incarnation. In this way the Christian seeks to belong totally to Mary; to love, honor, trust, and serve her in obedience that she may form us in His likeness just as she formed Him. Through this devotion to Mary, we grow in

imitation of Christ, being formed in His likeness and thus grow into deeper union with Him.

### **III. Mary in the Development of Doctrine**

The belief in *sola scriptura* and the consequent belief that there is no need for Tradition or the teaching authority of the Church is a common obstacle to devotion to Mary. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Sacred Scripture is profitable for these four ends and the Catholic Church teaches that the study of Scripture should be the very soul of sacred theology.<sup>460</sup> Still Paul insists on the importance of tradition and that his followers hold to the traditions he has taught them. He exhorts the Thessalonians, "So then brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us either by word of mouth or by letter (2 Thess. 2:15)." And in 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul commends the Christians "because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you." Paul clearly declares in these texts that Scripture and Tradition must remain together to give the full teaching of Christ.

St. John the Evangelist gives another reason why Scripture cannot be the sole rule of faith. Not everything Christ did is written down in Scripture: "But there are also many

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<sup>460</sup> Vatican Council II document, *Dei Verbum* 24.

other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."<sup>461</sup> Hence the necessity of Christ establishing an authoritative body of teachers that would pass on his teaching from generation to generation until the end of time.<sup>462</sup>

The question of the apparent silence in Scripture concerning Mary is valid. Why don't we find those things the Catholic Church believes and teaches concerning Mary stated explicitly in Scripture? The real issue with regard to Mary, or any doctrine for that matter, is that Christ never intended the Bible alone to teach, interpret and defend everything He wanted us to believe. The Bible is not a textbook of dogmas concerning Mary, nor is it a textbook of dogmas concerning the Trinity or Christ. It is true Catholic beliefs about Mary have deepened and developed through the centuries, yet Mariology was not the only doctrine to undergo such developments. In fact, it would be almost impossible to identify any doctrine that has not been articulated with greater depth and complexity as the Church matured in her understanding of the teachings of Christ. For example, nowhere does the Bible give an explicit formula explaining the dogma of the Trinity as the mystery of one God in three distinct yet equal Persons, or of Christ as one divine Person with two natures, human and divine. Yet, the majority of Christians, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant embrace these dogmas that are at the very root of Christianity.

The doctrine of the Trinity was not an explicit teaching of Scripture. Throughout the centuries the Church grew in its understanding of God's revelation concerning the

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<sup>461</sup> John 21:25

<sup>462</sup> Vatican Council II document, *Dei Verbum* 8.

Trinity through the life and worship, contemplation and study, theological research and controversy, and the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium.<sup>463</sup> Just as today, many contradictory opinions concerning the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit arose in the first centuries of Christianity, each with some passage of Scripture to back it up. Arius (d. 336) was one such individual. He was not able to reconcile Scripture passages such as the prologue of the Gospel of John which states, "And the Word was God," with those of the same Gospel which had Jesus say of Himself, "My Father is greater than I," so he denied the divinity of Jesus.

The Church responded to Arius by articulating more fully the doctrine of the Trinity based on the great commission of Christ to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Following the apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the council of Nicaea (325) that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, that is, one only God with him.<sup>464</sup> The Greek word the Church used to explain that the Son is God equal with the Father was "homoousios," or "one in being." Though the word homoousios is a non-biblical term and the teaching is not found explicitly in the Bible, the majority of Christians today accept this teaching.

In this same century a group known as the pneumatomachians, or fighters against the Holy Spirit, rose up in denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Against them the first council at Constantinople (381), following the Apostolic faith, taught concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit, "With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified."

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<sup>463</sup> Vatican Council II document *Dei Verbum* 8

Nowhere in Scripture are these words of the council to be found, yet almost all Christians accept the teaching that the Holy Spirit is one of the divine Persons of the Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son. Since the Bible did not give a word to adequately describe this union of three in one, Tertullian, an early third century writer, offered the Latin word “Trinitas” as a meaningful way to articulate the concept of three Persons in one Godhead. Again, most Christians today accept this nonbiblical term.

If we are willing to accept doctrinal developments and the use of nonbiblical terms in regard to the Trinity or to Christology, then it follows that we cannot reject legitimate developments of doctrine concerning Mary as being nonbiblical and consequently untrue. As Jaroslav Pelikan stated the question so well:

If the Protestant churches acknowledged the validity of the development of doctrine when it moved from the great commission of the Gospel of Matthew to produce the Nicene Creed, as all of the mainline Protestant Churches did and do, on what grounds could they reject development as it had moved from other lapidary passages of the Bible to lead to other doctrines? ... To reject this development of doctrine on the argument that it was a development and that development was in itself unacceptable made it difficult for the biblical exegesis of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods to contend with those on the left wing of the Reformation who, sharing the insistence of the "magisterial Reformers" on the sole authority of Scripture, rejected the reliance on the trinitarian doctrine of Nicaea as a necessary presupposition and method for reading biblical texts.<sup>465</sup>

If we rely on the Trinitarian doctrine of Nicaea to understand Scripture correctly, we are relying on the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. We cannot then reject that same teaching authority when it comes to Mary and her maternal mediation and intercession. Though Scripture does not explicitly use the words “Mary’s intercession” and “mediation” or the phrase “to Jesus through Mary,” the truth concerning her maternal

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<sup>464</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 242.

intercession and mediation is implicitly stated. It all depends on who is interpreting the text. The Bible cannot interpret or explain itself. At this point one could go through all the texts that have been seen by the Catholic Church to teach Mary's intercession and mediation to prove that this teaching is found in Scripture. Even then the objection could be raised, "The Catholic Church sees this but the Protestant denominations do not. Therefore the Catholic Church is wrong." The deeper issue is not whether one can find these truths concerning Mary in the Bible or not. The issue is, did Jesus set up a body of teachers who would teach in His name and interpret and guard that teaching with His authority until the end of time? Just as the Magisterium began with Christ's Great Commissioning of the Apostles in Matthew 28 as the Scriptural basis to form its doctrine of the Trinity, so the Magisterium begins with Scripture to form its doctrine concerning the maternal mediation of Mary.<sup>466</sup> The Church sees in John 19:26-28 a firm basis for the maternal cooperation of Mary in the life of the Church. If "the disciple whom Jesus loved" can be identified with all the disciples whom Jesus loved in all periods of history, then it may be said of Mary to all those disciples past and present, "Behold your mother." And if as Paul says, "it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me," then it is true that, in the Church, Mary beholds her son. This is exactly how that same teaching authority that gives us the confession of Nicaea based on Matthew 28 interprets John 19 when it states:

Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed

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<sup>465</sup> Pelikan, Jaroslav, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, Yale Univ. Press, 1996, p. 10.

<sup>466</sup> Vatican Council II document *Dei Verbum* 24.

as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formulation she cooperates with a mother's love.<sup>467</sup>

For the definition and explanation of dogma Jesus entrusted the Church with a body of teaching and authoritative teachers, not a written text. Jesus did not entrust Sacred Scripture to the Apostles, Jesus entrusted His teaching and His teaching authority to the Apostles and their successors, and then He commissioned them to go out and teach all nations until the end of time.

Since this teaching authority of the Church includes the authoritative interpretation of Scripture it may be helpful to include here a brief summation of the principles necessary to interpret Scripture correctly. The Second Vatican Council in its document on the Word of God (*Dei Verbum*) gave the key principles for the Catholic way of interpreting the Bible. To interpret Scripture correctly the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words.<sup>468</sup> In order to discover the intention of the human author we must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating in use at that time.<sup>469</sup> Since the principal author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit, "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written."<sup>470</sup> Vatican Council II went on in the same document to give three criteria for interpreting Scripture according to the Holy Spirit. We must be attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture."<sup>471</sup> Though Scripture is comprised of many stories it is principally one story, that of God's plan to save all

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<sup>467</sup> Vatican Council II document *Lumen Gentium* 63.

<sup>468</sup> *Dei Verbum* 12.

<sup>469</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 110.

<sup>470</sup> *Dei Verbum* 12.

mankind in Christ. Consequently, we must interpret each individual story or passage in light of the unity of God's plan.

We must be attentive to the coherence of the truths of the faith among themselves and within the whole of God's plan.<sup>472</sup> All of the truths of Christianity are related in some way to the very central truths of our faith. These are related in such a way that the truths of the Trinity and the Incarnation enlighten all of the other doctrines. According to this principle a teaching concerning one aspect of our faith cannot contradict a principle of a more central truth. We have seen this clearly in the relationship between the doctrine of the Incarnation expressed at the Council of Chalcedon and the role of Mary in the work of Christ and the Church. We must interpret Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church,"<sup>473</sup> Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God entrusted to the Apostles by Christ and then handed down to their successors, the Pope and the bishops in union with him.<sup>474</sup> By entrusting His teaching authority to the Apostles and to their successors, Christ entrusted the authoritative interpretation of His teaching found in Scripture to them as well. The Second Vatican Council stated it in this way, "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ."<sup>475</sup> Very simply stated, we must interpret Scripture in light of the constant teaching of Christ that has been handed down from the Apostles to our day by the Church. At this point it is critical to

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<sup>471</sup> *Dei Verbum* 12.

<sup>472</sup> *Dei Verbum* 12.

<sup>473</sup> *Dei Verbum* 12.

<sup>474</sup> *Dei Verbum* 9.

<sup>475</sup> *Dei Verbum* 10.

note that though I have taken an ecclesial and Catholic approach to the interpretation of the Scripture texts discussed there is an excellent ecumenical study, *Mary in the New Testament*, edited by Raymond Brown that is a valuable resource. It reaches a certain consensus on the interpretation of specific Marian texts in the New Testament by employing an almost exclusive use of the historical-critical method.<sup>476</sup>

#### IV. Christ, the Mediator Par Excellence

Generally speaking Protestant theology finds confirmation in its rejection of Mary's mediation or intercession based in part on 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The *Augsburg Confession*, article 21 states:

It is also taught among us that saints should be kept in remembrance so that our faith may be strengthened when we see what grace they received and how they were sustained by it. Moreover, their good works are to be an example for us, each of us in his own calling. So His Imperial Majesty may in salutary and godly fashion imitate the example of David in making war on the Turk, for both are incumbent of a royal office which demands the defense and protection of their subjects.

However, it cannot be proved from the Scriptures that we are to invoke the saints or seek help from them. 'For there is one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2:5), who is the only savior, the only high priest, advocate and intercessor before God (Romans 8:34). He alone has promised to hear our prayers. Moreover, according to the Scriptures, the highest form of divine service is sincerely to seek and call upon the same Jesus Christ in every time of need. 'If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous' (1 John 2:1).<sup>477</sup>

It is clear they interpret 1 Timothy 2:5, to mean Christ is the "sole" mediator between God and men. Thus, if we ascribe to Mary any form of mediation or intercession

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<sup>476</sup> Brown, Raymond, Donfried, Karl, Fitzmeyer, Joseph, and Reumann, John, *Mary in the New Testament*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978.



it seems as if we are placing her at the same level as Christ in his mediation and in this way it appears as if she usurps His unique role. According to Catholic teaching, there is only one unique Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus since only He is both God and man in one divine person. But the first and perfect mediation of Jesus Christ does not prevent His Mystical Body from entering into His one-mediation and cooperating with him on behalf of others. In fact, His primary mediation makes this possible. We all accept the fact that we mediate for others when we pray to God on their behalf. We mediate for others when we teach them about Christ and His offer of salvation. This does not go against Christ as the one Mediator between God and man because our efforts do not stand on their own. Our efforts become effective only because we have become one in Christ, the one Mediator. His mediation makes our mediation in Him and through Him possible.

We must read 1 Timothy 2:5 in the context of the entire passage. In verses 1-7 Paul is not saying that we should refrain from acting as intercessors for others because Christ is the one Mediator. His point is that we must pray and intercede for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, for our persecutors, and for the salvation of all those who reject the Gospel because Christ is the one Savior of all men. He is the one mediator between God and men and there is no other Savior we can pray to for their salvation. Paul emphasizes this teaching in 2:6-7 by noting that Christ gave himself as a ransom for *all*, not just for those already Christian. Throughout the entire passage Paul commands *all* Christians to be mediators and intercessors for all men because Christ is Savior for all. Christ alone is for *everyone* the only way to the Father. He is the go-between for them as well as for us. Only His saving death makes their redemption

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<sup>477</sup> *Apology for the Augsburg Confession*, article 21, found in Tavad, G., *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin*

possible, so pray for it. The high point of the passage is verse 5, where he enthrones Christ, the mediator par excellence, who by uniting Himself to humanity has made mediators of all people for the good of all. The whole passage, verses 1-7, is a unit and must be read as a unit. Its message is a missionary message.

The Catholic Church would agree that a creature could never usurp the unique causality of the one Mediator, Jesus Christ in the work of Redemption. Neither Mary nor the saints could ever be the source of grace and salvation. The one and only source of grace and salvation is Jesus Christ. But this does not exclude Mary and the saints, as well as all Christians, from cooperating with God in the building up of the kingdom, though we cooperate with him in a subordinate and totally dependent manner. As Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."<sup>478</sup>

God is the source of creation and salvation. Yet, God makes use of our cooperation in both of these. Scripture tells us that in the beginning, God entrusted humanity with the responsibility of subduing the earth and having dominion over it (Genesis 1:26-28). God gives parents the awesome responsibility of freely cooperating with him in procreation. "God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of

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*Mary*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1996, p. 114-115.

<sup>478</sup> 1 Cor. 3:6-9.

their neighbors.”<sup>479</sup> God also makes use of his creatures’ cooperation in the work of redemption. Parents are usually the first heralds of the faith to their children. God uses their cooperation to draw the child into a saving relationship with Christ, the one Mediator.

In both instances, that of cooperating with God to bring the work of creation and the work of salvation to completion, He makes use of His children’s cooperation. God creates from nothing and it is He who redeems the human race, but we are called, according to His gracious will, to cooperate with Him in both of these to bring them to completion. This is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of His greatness and goodness: “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”<sup>480</sup>

Now that she is in heaven, Mary continues to cooperate with Christ for our individual salvation by praying for us, disposing us to receive the grace of Christ that brings conversion and justification. She is not the source of this saving grace. God alone is the source of grace. Her role is one of cooperation with Christ though in a subordinate and dependent manner. Mary’s mediation and intercession in no way diminishes the one mediation of Christ, rather it shows forth his power and goodness. As the Second Vatican Council makes very clear:

Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men...flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely upon it, and draws all its power from it. No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways

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<sup>479</sup> CCC 307.

<sup>480</sup> Phil. 2:13.

among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.<sup>481</sup>

The early Fathers taught that Mary cooperated with God in the work of Redemption. They saw her as the “New Eve” who reverses through her faith and obedience what the first “Eve” destroyed through her unbelief and disobedience. Just as Eve was the helpmate of Adam in the work of original sin and the downfall of mankind; Mary is the “New Eve,” the helpmate of the “New Adam” in the work of Redemption. St. Justin Martyr, writing around the year 165, states:

The Son of God became man through the Virgin that the disobedience caused by the serpent might be destroyed in the same way in which it had originated. For Eve, while a virgin incorrupt, conceived the word which proceeded from the serpent, and brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary was filled with faith and joy when the Angel Gabriel told her the glad tidings...And through her was he born.<sup>482</sup>

## V. Why do Catholics Worship Mary?

To some, the role attributed to Mary in the devotion to Jesus through Mary, gives the appearance that Mary is worshipped or adored as God. To others, in the act of praying to Mary, it is assumed that the Church sees Mary as the source of all the good we seek in prayer and as a result, that she is regarded as divine and deserving of adoration. As stated above, Mary is not the end of our prayer. God is the ultimate end of all our prayer. Consequently all prayer is addressed and directed to the Father as the end, goal or terminus of prayer and no one can pray except by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>483</sup> For this reason it is necessary to make a critical distinction. Catholics do not worship Mary.

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<sup>481</sup> LG 60, 62

<sup>482</sup> PG, 6, 709-712.

<sup>483</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:3, cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2680.

Adoration is the worship and homage that is due to God alone. Adoration of Mary has never been nor will it ever be part of true Catholic teaching and prayer.

It is proper to say that we venerate Mary and all of God's saints. Veneration is the honor due to the excellence or achievement of a created person. We see an example of veneration every four years in the Olympics. The awarding of an Olympic gold medal for excellence in athletics is a form of veneration. This honor given for the achievement of an athlete takes nothing away from the glory of God. There is no confusion that an Olympic athlete is being worshipped as a god; we are merely giving the proper honor due to the athlete. It is under this category of veneration that we find the honor and reverence given to Mary and the saints in heaven because of the excellence they attained in living a life in imitation of Christ. It is pleasing to God and it gives Him glory when we honor those who excelled in love of Him and love of neighbor.<sup>484</sup>

It is necessary to remember that the love and honor a person gives to Mary and the saints does not end with the saints themselves but rather it reaches ultimately to God through the saints. In honoring a beautiful work of art we are truly honoring the artist. It is only by God's grace that Mary and the saints reached holiness. In a very real sense they are His works of art. This is especially true about honoring Mary, His greatest work of grace. Therefore, nothing is taken away from the glory and honor of God through veneration of Mary and the saints, in fact we truly honor God when we venerate those who excelled in love for Him.

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<sup>484</sup> Unfortunately, regardless of the theological distinctions made to demonstrate the difference between veneration and worship, popular language still causes many difficulties. When Catholic theologians say venerate, our Protestant brethren hear the word "worship." The problem is not entirely their fault since most standard dictionaries render the two terms synonymous. An example of this can be found in the *New World*

## VI. Queen of Heaven

Not only does praying to Mary give the impression that the Catholic Church worships her, the title "Queen of Heaven" is also a source of confusion on this point. What is the source, the meaning and the purpose of this Marian title? Beginning with Sacred Scripture God revealed clearly that His Son Jesus is the King of the universe. As it is written, He is the "Prince of Peace,"<sup>485</sup> the "King of kings and the Lord of lords."<sup>486</sup> At the Annunciation the angel tells us, "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 forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."<sup>487</sup> From the earliest of times Christians have reflected on the royal identity of Jesus Christ and upon the intimate connection between Jesus and His Mother, and come to the reasonable conclusion that if Jesus is the King of kings, then Mary is the Queen-Mother.

The Fathers bear witness to the Apostolic teaching in their writings. Here we find an almost universal recognition of Mary's Queenship. In a fragment of a homily attributed to Origen (185-254), we are given a witness to the early Church's understanding of Mary's royal dignity. Origen expresses this conviction of Mary's Queenship with this comment on the greeting of Elizabeth to Mary upon her arrival at the visitation: "It is I who should have come to visit you, because you are blessed above all women; you are the Mother of my Lord; you are my Lady."<sup>488</sup> "Lady" or Queen, is the feminine of "Lord" or King.

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*Dictionary* which states that veneration means to worship (Guralnik, David, *Webster's New World Dictionary*, Collins World, U.S.A, 1978, p. 1575.)

<sup>485</sup> Isaiah 9:6

<sup>486</sup> Revelation 19:16

<sup>487</sup> Luke 1:32,33

<sup>488</sup> *Fragment*, PG 13, 1902 D, found in *Theotokos: Woman, Mother, Disciple, a Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God*, John Paul II, Pauline Books and Media, 2000, pg. 209.

St. Ephraem (+373), the great poet, describes Mary as speaking in this way, "Let heaven sustain me in its embrace, because I am honored above it. For heaven was not Thy mother, but Thou hast made it Thy throne. How much more honorable and venerable than the throne of a king is his mother."<sup>489</sup> And in another place Ephraem prays, "Majestic and Heavenly Maid, Lady, Queen, protect and keep me under your wing lest Satan the sower of destruction glory over me, lest my wicked foe be victorious against me."<sup>490</sup> St. Gregory Nazianzen (+389), calls Mary "the Mother of the King of the universe."<sup>491</sup> St. John Damascene (+770), writes, "When she became the Mother of the Creator, she truly became queen of all creatures."<sup>492</sup> In the first eight centuries of the Church we find innumerable testimonies handed down by the Fathers of Mary's royal dignity as the Queen of all, the Queen of heaven and earth.<sup>493</sup>

Like the writings of the Fathers, the sacred liturgy is a faithful witness and reflection of the belief and doctrine of the Church throughout the ages. In every age in both the east and the west the liturgy bears witness to the constant belief that Mary is the Queen of the universe.<sup>494</sup> Though there was not an official liturgical feast celebrating the Queenship of Mary, hymns and homilies abound with royal titles of Mary: she is Empress (basilissa), Queen or Princess (anossa), Universal Queen (pantanassa), and Sovereign Lady (Kyria).<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> St. Ephraem, *Hymni de B Mana*, ed. Th. J. Lamy, t. II, Mechliniae, 1886, hym. XIX, p. 624. In *Ad Caeli Reginam*, A. 10.

<sup>490</sup> St. Ephraem, *Oratio ad Dei Matrem*; *Opera omnia*, Ed. Assemani, t. III, Romae, 1747, pg. 546, in *Ad Caeli Reginam*, A. 10.

<sup>491</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Poemata dogmatica*, XVIII, v. 58; PG XXXVII, 485, in *Ad Caeli Reginam*, A. 11.

<sup>492</sup> *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 4, 14, PG 94, 1157, in John Paul II, *Catechesis on Mary*, 209-210.

<sup>493</sup> Cf. Pope Pius XII, *Ad Caeli Reginam*, articles 8-22.

<sup>494</sup> *Ad Caeli Reginam*, A. 26-30.

<sup>495</sup> O'Donnell, Christopher, *At Worship with Mary*, Michael Glazier, Inc. 1988, p. 152

At the turn of the twentieth century petitions were sent to Rome asking for the establishment of the Feast of the Queenship of Mary. In 1925 the Church instituted the Feast of Christ the King. And finally in 1954 Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam* proclaimed the Feast of the Queenship of Mary to be celebrated on May 31. In this encyclical, Pius XII gives two key reasons as the foundation of Mary's Queenship: first, she is the Mother of God, the King of kings, and second, Mary cooperated in the work of redemption. John Paul II, in a catechesis on the Queenship of Mary says, "Christ is king not only because he is Son of God, but also because he is the Redeemer. Mary is queen not only because she is Mother of God, but also because, associated as the New Eve with the New Adam, she cooperated in the work of the redemption of the human race."<sup>496</sup> In 1969 Pope Paul VI moved the feast of the Queenship of Mary from May 31 to August 22, seven days after the celebration of the Assumption. In *Marialis Cultus*, of Paul VI, we see why the change was made,

The Solemnity of August 15 celebrates the glorious Assumption of Mary into heaven. It is a feast of her destiny of fullness and blessedness, of the glorification of her immaculate soul and of her virginal body, of her perfect configuration to the Risen Christ; a feast that sets before the eyes of the Church and of all mankind the image and the consoling proof of the fulfillment of their final hope, namely, that this full glorification is the destiny of all those whom Christ has made His brothers, having "flesh and blood in common with them" (Hebrews 2:14; cf. Galatians 4:4). The Solemnity of the Assumption is prolonged in the celebration of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which occurs seven days later. On this occasion we contemplate her who, seated beside the King of ages, shines forth as Queen and intercedes as Mother."<sup>497</sup>

In this passage Paul VI highlights that the feast of the Assumption sets before our eyes the image and consoling proof of the fulfillment of our final hope, namely, the full glorification of all those whom Christ has made His brothers. Then he goes on to say that

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<sup>496</sup> John Paul II, *Theotokos, Woman, Mother, Disciple*, given in a general audience on July 23, 1997, p. 210.



the celebration of the Queenship prolongs the solemnity of the Assumption. Just as Mary's Assumption is a sign of certain hope to our own resurrection, so too the Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven is a sign of sure hope that if we faithfully serve Christ we too will receive a crown of glory.

Pope Paul VI transferred the feast of the Queenship of Mary from May 31 to August 22 in order to connect the Assumption and Queenship of Mary for the reason that both manifest the destiny promised to humanity if we persevere faithfully in our union with Christ as his true disciples. John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* draws this point out beautifully:

Connected with this exaltation of the noble "Daughter of Sion" through her Assumption into heaven is the mystery of her eternal glory. For the Mother of Christ is glorified as "Queen of the Universe." She who at the Annunciation called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" remained throughout her earthly life faithful to what this name expresses. In this she confirmed that she was a true "disciple" of Christ, who strongly emphasized that his mission was one of service: the Son of Man "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). In this way Mary became the first of those who, "serving Christ also in others, with humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign," and she fully obtained that "state of royal freedom" proper to Christ's disciples" to serve means to reign!<sup>498</sup>

Christ obeyed even at the cost of death, and he was therefore raised up by the Father (cf. Philippians 2:8-9). Thus he entered into the glory of His kingdom. Mary was obedient to all the saving plans of God, even at the cost of the death of her Son, and for this reason she was assumed into heaven and entered into the glory of Christ's Kingdom being crowned Queen of Heaven. Now she is not only our sign of sure hope for the resurrection of our bodies but that if we faithfully persevere in obedience to Christ we too may enter into the glory of His kingdom and reign with Him.

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<sup>497</sup> *Marialis Cultus* 6.

## Conclusion

The topic of our study has been the devotion to Jesus through Mary as taught by St. Louis de Montfort. Though this devotion reaches a high point in Montfort, it does not begin in its essential points with him. As far as it is known we do not find the exact phrase “to Jesus through Mary” in writing until the twelfth century in St. Odo of Canterbury, yet the whole tradition of giving oneself to Jesus through Mary has been well documented. We find the presence of this special devotion to the Mother of God as far back as the seventh century with Isidore of Seville (560 – 636). It has come down through the centuries in many different forms, such as slavery, servitude or as consecration to Mary. All of these expressions gave a very real sense of total abandonment to Mary, of placing oneself into her possession in order to belong more fully to Christ.

During the seventeenth century this devotion spread throughout Europe. In certain instances Holy Slavery to Mary or Consecration to Mary failed to be expressed or lived in a way that was centered on Christ. This gave rise to criticisms and the question of whether it was permissible or idolatrous to give oneself to Mary as a slave. In other cases the devotion remained on the level of exterior practices, failing to lead the devotee to the true goal – transformation in Christ.

Many of these ambiguities and abuses were corrected through the work of Cardinal Bérulle and the French School. They labored to lead people to imitate Christ in all of His interior attitudes and dispositions in order to be conformed to Him. Cardinal Bérulle made a significant contribution to this devotion to Mary by formulating his consecration in such a way that he first gave himself to Jesus and then to Mary as her

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<sup>498</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* 41.

slave. Though this was an important development, the total gift of self to Mary in slavery left the devotion vulnerable to the old criticism of idolatry.

St. Louis de Montfort, inspired by the patristic and medieval traditions of giving oneself as a slave to Mary, and by the Christ-centered spirituality of Cardinal Bérulle and the French School, developed his own unique devotion known as “to Jesus through Mary.” Montfort made a critical development to devotion to Mary by relating the gift of self directly to Christ. He did so by expressing his gift in terms of "slavery of Jesus in Mary" or "consecration to Jesus through Mary." By articulating the devotion in this manner he made clear that Mary is the means by which the gift is given rather than the goal, which must be God alone. There is only one movement: towards Christ. But the one movement implies two distinct relationships, one with Mary, the perfect means and the other with Christ, our ultimate end.<sup>499</sup> With this, Montfort made a significant development to the spirituality of "Holy Slavery to Mary."

Montfort demonstrated clearly that devotion to Mary must be Christocentric. Montfort himself declares, "if the final end is not Jesus Christ it is diabolical."<sup>500</sup> He is very clear about the purpose of devotion to Mary, “All our perfection consists in being conformed, united and consecrated to Jesus Christ.”<sup>501</sup> Montfort continually reminds his audience that it is only by becoming one with Jesus that we enter into the consecration, the divinization the Father wills for us. While Mary has been given a singular role in the divine economy, she is only a creature. She is not a divinity. Therefore we cannot

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<sup>499</sup> A. Bossard, *To Consecrate Oneself to Mary*, in *Cahiers marials* 28, no 137, 1983, 101-102, translated by Koehler, Fr. Theodore, *Holy Slavery of Love, Jesus Living in Mary*, Montfort Pub., Bay Shore, NY, 1994, p. 1163, footnote 27.

<sup>500</sup> TD 62

<sup>501</sup> TD 120

consecrate ourselves to Mary in the strict sense of the word for this would be idolatry. For this reason Montfort rightly calls Mary the greatest *means* for obtaining and preserving divine Wisdom. And this is why Montfort teaches us to give everything to Jesus through the hands of Mary so that we may be more fully conformed to His will. "All he suffers, all he thinks, all the good he says or does, belongs to Mary in order that she may dispose of it according to the will of her Son."<sup>502</sup>

In John Paul II we find the most important contemporary proponent of the devotion "to Jesus through Mary." The Marian thought of this Pope was influenced by a number of important factors: the Marian devotion of his native Poland, the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in the eighth chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, and his own philosophy of the human person. Yet most of all, as John Paul Himself testifies, the greatest influence on his understanding of devotion to Mary came through St. Louis de Montfort by reading his treatise on *True Devotion to Mary*.

Pope John Paul makes a number of significant contributions to the devotion "to Jesus through Mary." He offers an unparalleled depth and clarity in answering the question, "Why should a disciple of Christ entrust himself to Jesus through Mary?" He does so by demonstrating that Mary is present in the mystery of the Church as the discreet yet essential path of birth from the Holy Spirit. He explains how Mary became present and active in the redemptive mission of Christ by accepting her motherhood in faith, that is, as a total gift of her person to the entire saving plan of the Most High. This gift of self reached its perfection at the Cross, where, through her complete self-emptying united to that of her Son, she became present in the mystery of the Church as our Mother. In this

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<sup>502</sup> TD 124

way John Paul highlights the correspondence between the events of the Incarnation and the Cross. In the Incarnation Mary became the Mother of Christ. At the Cross she became the Mother of the Church. Both of these events happened through “her discreet yet essential presence” which as John Paul says, “indicates the path of ‘birth from the Holy Spirit.’” John Paul explains the meaning of this *presence* of Mary in a homily entitled, “Presence of the Mother:”

Everything *through* Mary. This is the authentic interpretation of the presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and of the Church, as is proclaimed by Chapter VIII of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. This interpretation corresponds to the tradition of the saints, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Grignon de Montfort and Maximilian Kolbe.<sup>503</sup>

According to John Paul, Christ entrusted Himself to Mary in the Incarnation. This was the fundamental event in the economy of salvation and the prototype of the way in which Christ would come to each person. Just as Christ entrusted Himself to Mary in order to save humanity, we are to follow His example and entrust ourselves to her in order to return to the Father in and through Christ. Convinced of this fact he urges all the faithful to entrust themselves to Jesus through Mary, that we may be formed by the Holy Spirit in whose action she cooperates with a mother’s love.

Though there are many similarities between the Marian theology and spirituality of Montfort and John Paul II, the Pope makes a significant contribution to the devotion to Jesus through Mary in two ways. First he departs from the use of the term “slavery” to describe our relationship with Mary, choosing rather to express our relationship with her in terms of filial love. Second, he introduces the term “maternal presence” to describe the

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<sup>503</sup> Pope John Paul II, in a homily titled “Presence of the Mother” at Jasna Gora, June 4, 1979, as found in Maria Zalecki, *Wyszynski, Wojtyla and the Woman*, in *Mater Fidei et Fidelium, Collected Essays to Honor Theodore Koehler on His 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, Marian Library Studies, Dayton, OH, p. 452.

form or the modality of Mary's mediation. On this first point John Paul says that the passage John 19:25-27, "Woman, Behold your son!"; "Behold your mother." expresses the new motherhood of the Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood which shows us Mary's place in the life of Christ's disciples. The Pope points out that the words from the same passage, "And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home," indicates that the role of a son was attributed to John. Furthermore, since Mary was given to him personally, the statement indicates everything expressed by the intimate relationship of a child with its mother. The Pope says that all of this can be included in the word "entrusting," which is the response of a child's love to the love of a mother. This self-entrusting of a child to its mother is John Paul's preferred way of describing our relationship with Mary, rather than that of "slavery." He emphasizes that this filial relationship, this self-entrusting of a child to its mother has its beginning in Christ and is directed to lead the believer to a deeper relationship with Him. It is in this way that John Paul teaches us to go to Jesus through Mary.

In Part II we addressed two main reasons why Catholics and non-Catholics alike have difficulty with the devotion to Jesus through Mary. The first is connected to the reformation principle *sola scriptura*, which holds the Bible to be the sole rule of faith. For many this presents an obstacle to this devotion since it is not explicitly formulated or explained in Scripture nor can it be logically deduced from the Bible alone. As demonstrated in chapter one of Part II, the difficulty does not reside in the devotion itself, but in the principle of "Scripture alone," in which we find a false understanding of the nature of divine Revelation and its relationship to the economy of salvation. With a correct understanding of Revelation we see that it is Sacred Scripture and Tradition that

make up the Word of God. That Tradition transmits all the Church holds and believes to each generation and that Christ entrusted the Magisterium with His authority to faithfully interpret Revelation until He returns in glory. Once we draw together this understanding of Revelation with the evidence of Chapter one in Part I that demonstrated that the devotion to Jesus through Mary was firmly grounded in Tradition and connect these to the Biblical presentation of the devotion by Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Mater* we see that to Jesus through Mary is entirely in accord with the Word of God.

The second main reason for misunderstanding and difficulty with regard to this devotion was connected to the reformation principles of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*. Like *sola scriptura*, these principles flow from an incorrect understanding of the economy of salvation. At the root of this division among Christians is the denial that supported by God's grace human beings can cooperate in the work of salvation. This denial begins to occur when one loses sight of the truth that we are saved by the willed cooperation of the Sacred Humanity of Christ with His divinity. This leads to a flawed understanding of anthropology and the economy of salvation. The natural effect of this error is then to minimize to the point of extinction human cooperation in the work of salvation by the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, and by Mary, his mother according to the flesh.

The differences between the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformers in regard to their understanding of human cooperation, and thus, of Mary's role, arise from the differences in their understanding of human nature. Catholic anthropology is derived from and in accord with a fully authentic Christology, while the reformer's view of human nature was flawed because of erroneous Christological presuppositions. If we begin with a correct doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, we reach a correct

understanding of human nature, of human cooperation in divine activity, of the entire economy of salvation and thus of Mary's collaboration in the work of Christ. Given the Catholic understanding of the role of human cooperation in the economy of salvation, the theology of mediation becomes an acceptable doctrine. This in turn opens the door for Christians to embrace Mary's maternal role in their lives through the devotion to Jesus through Mary.

Ultimately God has no absolute need of Mary. Yet, He is a Father who willed to allow His children to freely enter into His work. In this manner He willed the maternal role of Mary in the life of Christ and in His Mystical Body. She freely entered into the Father's plan in order to give birth to the Redeemer and then to educate and form Christ, all through an inseparable association with the Holy Spirit. Now she is our mother by virtue of the life of Jesus dwelling in our soul. In association with the Holy Spirit, she has been given the role of educating and forming her children in the image of Christ. When we imitate Jesus' love toward Mary we come under her tutelage allowing her to form us in the likeness of Christ. As Pope St. Pius X in his encyclical on Mary of February 2, 1904 expressed, "Nobody in the world has known Jesus as she has; nobody is a better teacher and better guide to teach Jesus. From this it follows...that neither is anybody equal to her in uniting men to Jesus."<sup>504</sup> This is the divine economy established by the Incarnation. It is for this reason that Mary is the most effective means to union with Christ. Consequently, this is the reason St. Louis de Montfort, Pope John Paul II and the Church herself encourage all the faithful to go to Jesus through Mary.

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<sup>504</sup> Pope St. Pius X, *Ad diem illum*, 1904.



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