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**Mary Ann De Trana**

**Letters of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II  
Concerning the Veneration of the Virgin Mary:**

**A Study in Ecumenical Development**

**Master of Arts in Theology**

**1991**

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21 APR 1992

## ABSTRACT

Mary Ann De Trana

*Letters of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II Concerning the Veneration of the Virgin*

*Mary: A Study in Ecumenical Development*

M.A. -- 1991

As seen from the outside, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches appear to have many things in common. Among these is the veneration of the Virgin Mary, which is part of their common heritage of over 1000 years, though the Orthodox would insist that there are important differences between Roman Catholic and Orthodox Mariology.

Serious ecumenical contacts and discussions between the Church of Rome and other Churches have only begun in the last thirty to forty years, and this thesis examines letters of Pope Paul VI and John Paul II on Marian doctrine, written during the period of increasing communication

The theme focuses on the ecumenical implication of these documents, as well as their change in emphasis on the part of the Papacy. From Pope John XXIII's first opening the doors to ecumenism, the Bishops of Rome have become progressively more interested in, or conscious of, the ecumenical implications of their statements on Mary. At the same time, there has been a considerable shift in interest on the part of the Papacy, changing from talking about the Western Churches, to a grand strategy which exercises an approach to the Orthodox Churches from their common heritage of the Virgin Mary.

**Letters of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II  
Concerning the Veneration of the Virgin Mary:**

**A Study in Ecumenical Development**

by

**Mary Ann De Trana**

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**A Thesis submitted in the Department of Theology  
for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of Durham**

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**University of Durham 1991**

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## FORWARD

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my tutor, Dr. John McHugh, for his guidance and encouragement in this study, and to my husband and our sons, for their patience and support while I was doing this work.

As there are significant differences between British and American styles of punctuation, I have chosen to follow the American style, outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, thirteenth edition.

## ABBREVIATIONS

In order to avoid unnecessary footnotes, each document will be referred to by its Latin title in the first reference to it. Thereafter, any references to that document within the chapter where it is the principal subject discussed will be indicated merely by the section number. For example, “*Redemptoris Mater*, section 4,” would be simply “§4.” In a few cases, where the material cited has not been given section numbers in the original, the citation will use a page number. For example, a reference to “*Christi Matri*, p.221,” would be “(221).” Later references will indicate the document referred to by using one of the abbreviations listed below, e.g. “RM§4” or “CM210.”

### Documents Considered in this Study

ACC	<i>A Concilio Constantinopolitano</i>
CM	<i>Christi Matri</i>
DM	<i>Dives in misericordia</i>
DV	<i>Dominum et vivificantem</i>
DS	<i>Duodecimum saeculum</i>
EM	<i>Euntes in mundum</i>
MBD	<i>Magnum Baptismi donum</i>
MC	<i>Marialis Cultus</i>
MM	<i>Mense Maio</i>
RH	<i>Redemptor hominis</i>
RM	<i>Redemptoris Mater</i>
RMO	<i>Recurrrens Mensis October</i>
SA	<i>Slavorum Apostoli</i>
SM	<i>Signum magnum</i>

### Other Abbreviations

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
NCE	<i>The New Catholic Encyclopaedia</i>
TPS	<i>The Pope Speaks</i>



## Chapter 1

### Introduction: The Advent of Pope John XXIII

The Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches have a common history of over a thousand years. The date traditionally assigned for the official separation between them is 1054, and a rift remains to this day. In spite of several attempts to recover the lost unity (notably at the Councils of Lyons in 1274 and Florence in 1439), the effect of that separation and of having gone their separate ways for nearly a millennium, is that the two churches have become strangers to each other, and have frequently viewed each other with suspicion and even fear.

The issues which separate the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are extremely complicated. If the disagreements could be reduced to theological questions, then there would be a real possibility of making some progress in resolving the differences. The fact is that the climate of discourse in the past frequently has been so overshadowed by political and what could even be termed emotional considerations, that substantial understanding has not been forthcoming.

These two churches, the Catholic and the Orthodox, have, as seen from outside, a substantial number of things in common. Among these are their sacramental system, hierarchical structure, monastic tradition, and veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is this veneration of Mary which is to be considered in this study, which will consist in an analysis of specific Papal documents on the Blessed Virgin Mary from Popes Paul VI and John Paul II to see how far, and in what way, these documents may contribute to ecumenical understanding between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.



But before we come to this analysis and critique, a certain amount of background is required, to set the writings of these two Popes in a clear context.

Our story may begin with the gathering of the first World Conference of the Faith and Order Movement at Lausanne in 1927. Some Orthodox had been involved in the movement since 1920, and though an approach had been made at that time to Pope Benedict XV, it had proved unsuccessful. But once the agenda of the 1927 Lausanne Conference was known (the unity of the Church, its essence, its Creed), Benedict's successor, Pope Pius XI (1922-39), reacted swiftly. A month before its opening, on 8 July 1927, a decree from the Holy Office positively forbade any Catholics to attend; and six months later Pius himself replied, on 6 January 1928, with an encyclical, *Mortalium Animos*, which rejected the whole approach of the Faith and Order Movement. To be fair to him, his negative reaction was both logical and consistent, in that he followed to its natural conclusion the theology dominant in the Roman Communion at that time. Fifteen years later, Pope Pius XII (1939-58) took the process one step further, in the encyclical, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (29 June 1943), in which "the Church" was identified with the Roman Catholic Communion (§§39-40). It represented the complete triumph of the theology of Robert Bellarmine.<sup>1</sup> Two such encyclicals in fifteen years might have seemed to set up insuperable barriers to ecumenical dialogue, but encyclicals are not necessarily irrevocable. A far greater stumbling block was posed by Pius XII's definition of the dogma of the Assumption, on 1 November 1950.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bellarmine (1542-1641), the leading theologian of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, gave a definition of the Church which was to become a classic formulation. The Church, he wrote, "is an assembly of men and women who are bound together by their profession of one and the same Christian faith, and by sharing in the same sacraments, under the rule of legitimate pastors, and principally (*praecipue*) of the one Vicar of Christ on earth, the Bishop of Rome." The Latin is to be found in his *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, Lib. III, *De Ecclesia militante*, Chap. II, n.9. In n.10 one finds his equally famous remark that the Church is a human society just as clearly visible and tangible as the Kingdom of France or the Republic of Venice. Both texts occur in *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, vol. 2 (Wolfgang Wickhart, Prague, 1721), p. 65a. For a modern Roman Catholic comment on this definition see, for example, J.M.R. Tillard, *The Bishop of Rome* (London: SPCK, 1983), 100 and Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 285-6. I owe this observation to Dr. John McHugh.

But then, on 28 October 1958, Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, Patriarch of Venice, was elected Pope, choosing to be known as John XXIII.

Angelo Roncalli came from humble circumstances. He was born in 1881 in Sotto il Monte near Bergamo in Lombardy, the third of thirteen children, and the eldest son. His parents were sharecroppers, and it was naturally expected that he would carry on the family work. But his interest in becoming a priest began in early childhood, and he entered the seminary at Bergamo at age 12. His family background also gave him, in addition to a strong faith, a profound veneration for Mary; in short, his home was exactly like that of many other Mediterranean peasants, a factor which would later facilitate his interest in and empathy with the Orthodox Churches.

In 1900 he was sent to study in Rome, where, although not a brilliant student, he applied himself well, becoming especially interested in history. After completing his studies with a doctorate in canon law, he was ordained priest in Rome in 1904.

For the nine years following ordination he worked as secretary to the new Bishop of Bergamo, Radini-Tadeschi, while also teaching theology and serving as spiritual director for the seminarians. During this time Roncalli began what was to become a forty-year task of editing the writings of St. Charles Borromeo, the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, whose skill and prudence in applying the disciplinary decrees of the Council of Trent during the Counter-Reformation gave the future Pope John XXIII a model for the role of a bishop. Following the mind of the Council of Trent, Borromeo believed each diocesan bishop with his council was responsible for reforming a diocese, rather than apostolic visitors (who represent the Pope).<sup>2</sup>

After Radini-Tadeschi's death in 1914, Roncalli wrote his biography, and sent a copy to the reigning pope, Benedict XV, who had been a personal friend of the late bishop. Pope Benedict remembered Roncalli, and in 1920 brought him to Rome, where

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII: Shepherd of the Modern World* (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1987), 54.

he soon became known to a wider circle, so that in 1925 Pope Pius XI made him a bishop, and sent him as apostolic visitor to Bulgaria. There he remained until 1935, having been appointed Apostolic Delegate in 1931.

His ten-year experience in Bulgaria taught him several lessons essential to engaging in ecumenical contact with the Orthodox. For the first time in his life, he was living in a country where the Roman Catholic Church was in the minority, and so learned how it was viewed by the Orthodox there. He experienced the tension between Catholics and Orthodox, and learned that everything had to be approached with charity, and when possible, on a pastoral level. Further, because of Bulgaria's precarious position near the Soviet Union, he experienced first hand the pressures on the Church from the Communists, and the conflicting pressures on the King from the Church and from the Communists.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church at this time was a microcosm of the problems experienced by Orthodox Churches throughout the world. In schism from the Ecumenical Patriarchate since 1872, subject to Communist pressure, working with a largely uneducated faithful, and carrying in its memory the record of unpleasant and often tragic clashes with the Eastern Rite Catholics (Uniates), it frequently reacted to any move from Rome with invective and condemnation.<sup>3</sup> Roncalli's contact with the Bulgarians, offering help to the victims of terrorism and earthquakes, taught him to love them, to sympathize with them, and to realize that the hostility between Orthodox and Catholics was often prompted by fear and misunderstanding, as well as by shameful chapters in history in which both sides had done each other mischief. He also learned that the Orthodox were not moved by scholastic arguments, rather by "a living apologetics that requires no other miracle than love."<sup>4</sup> This phrase was to be the touchstone of Roncalli's approach to the Orthodox throughout his life, and the writings of its author, the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>4</sup> Lambert Beauduin, in *Irénikon* (June-July, 1928, p. 229), quoted by Hebblethwaite, 123.

Benedictine Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960), were to have a deep influence in his ecumenical outlook.<sup>5</sup>

Among the most pressing needs of the Bulgarian Catholics was to secure for themselves an indigenous bishop, of their own rite, and after many representations to Rome, Roncalli at last succeeded in accomplishing this: on his recommendation, a Bulgarian priest, Stefan Kurtev, was nominated to the post, and on 5 December 1926 was ordained bishop for the Bulgarians of the Byzantine Slav rite in San Clemente in Rome, the church which contains the tomb of St. Cyril, Apostle of the Slavs.<sup>6</sup>

Roncalli's experience in regularly attending Byzantine rite liturgies, learning about their rich culture, so different from his own Roman background, enabled him to learn to love and appreciate Slavic music and the piety of the people. Even when in 1927 and 1928 decrees were issued forbidding Roman Catholic participation in ecumenical gatherings, his ecumenical contacts continued naturally, though on a personal and pastoral level.

Yet his years in Bulgaria were also destined to be marred by one major and very painful incident. In the fall of 1930, King Boris of Bulgaria and Princess Giovanna of Savoy were to be married. The union was viewed on both sides as highly desirable, for it put Bulgaria on the map and gave Italy an ally in the Balkans.

Boris, although brought up as a Catholic, had to become Orthodox in order to ascend the throne in predominantly Orthodox Bulgaria. After obtaining a dispensation from Rome to have a Catholic wedding in Assisi, promising to have only one wedding ceremony, and that a Catholic one, and promising to bring up any children as Catholic, he

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<sup>5</sup> Beauduin had been deeply involved with work for reunion with the Eastern Churches through the monastery he had founded in 1925 at Amay (Liège), and which is now at Chevetogne in Belgium. "The bold views of Beauduin in liturgy and ecclesiology shocked many people. In 1928 he had to leave Amay; in January 1931, when he returned from a visit to Bulgaria, he was brought before a Roman tribunal, condemned, and sent to the Abbey of En-Calcat". In 1950 he was able to return to Chevetogne, and eventually to hear Angelo Roncalli as Patriarch of Venice say "The true method of working for the reunion of the Churches is that of Dom Beauduin" See the article "Beauduin, Lambert" by N. Huyghebart in the NCE, vol. 2, 199-200.

<sup>6</sup> Leone Algisi, *John the Twenty-third* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1963), 73.

was, four days later, married in an Orthodox ceremony in Sofia. When the first child was born, the baby was baptized Orthodox.

Two problems arose for Roncalli from this marriage between Boris and Giovanna. Roman canon law at the time would have regarded a “mixed” marriage in an Orthodox church as being not merely unlawful, but also invalid, and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church would have held equally forceful objections about the Catholic ceremony. Hence he was in trouble with the Vatican, for not having foreseen and forewarned the authorities there. Moreover, Italy, and especially King Victor Emmanuel III, naturally regarded the “double cross” as an insult, and so he was in disfavor also with Italian public opinion and with the royal family.

It is, therefore, greatly to his credit, that amid all this, Roncalli could understand and sympathize with Boris’s position. With the welfare of his country as his first obligation, Boris had to perform a balancing act between the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Communists. The majority of the Bulgarians were Orthodox, and the Communists were always looking for ways to capitalize on the disunity and political factions in Bulgaria. Boris had to keep the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on his side. Roncalli, however, suffered greatly for it, and it taught him a lesson about the reality of Orthodox-Roman Catholic relations which was later to serve him well.

When he departed from Sofia, Bulgaria, in December 1934, his farewell sermon signalled that he truly did understand the Orthodox point of view, for he spoke of the Papal claims as “one of the most fundamental points” of difference between the Orthodox and Roman Catholics, and of the search for unity “with” Peter, not “under” him.<sup>7</sup> At that time, this was most significant.

His new appointment was as Apostolic Delegate to Turkey and to Greece (1934-44). In January 1935, he took up residence in Istanbul. In addition to his pastoral

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<sup>7</sup> Hebblethwaite, 141.

responsibility for the 35,000 Catholics of different rites who lived there, he was to improve relations with the nearly 100,000 Orthodox who endured there, loyal to the Ecumenical Patriarch, Photius II, in the Phanar.<sup>8</sup> Since the anti-religious attitudes of post-Islamic Turkey were directed at Catholics as well as Orthodox, he fully appreciated the difficulties of the Ecumenical Patriarch, who continued to live on in the few crumbling buildings left to him. This time spent in Turkey and Greece convinced him, even at this early date, that the key to unity with the Orthodox would be found in their mariology, for despite centuries of theological quarrels, they still shared, the common heritage of the *Theotokos* (the Mother of God).<sup>9</sup>

Angelo Roncalli was to be the first Pope in modern times who really knew the Orthodox Church and Orthodox people. Indeed, he was the first since, perhaps, Pope Gregory the Great, to have resided in Constantinople (590-604).<sup>10</sup> A combination of temperament, background and circumstances placed him in the position to be interested in the Orthodox. He was by temperament a conciliatory person, preferring always to affirm, rather than to criticize; his family background, so similar to that of many Orthodox, we have already noted; and circumstances (or Providence) placed him for nearly twenty years (1925-44) in the historical anti-Latin heartlands of Orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup> While serving in Istanbul, he was instructed to search for ways to establish official diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Greece, and though he was not successful in this, the contacts prepared him for later dealings with the Greek Orthodox. And most importantly, he had gained a sense of how the Orthodox viewed these problems.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory I, "Dialogos," resided in Constantinople as Pope Pelagius II's representative to the imperial court for five or six years, between 579 and 585. (J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986], s.v. "Gregory I.")

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting therefore to note that already, in 1906, only two years after his ordination to the priesthood, he had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he had been deeply disturbed by the disorder and confusion at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, by the many rites, beliefs and languages, and had begun there and then to pray for a reunion of the Churches. See Hebblethwaite, 55.

In Istanbul, more even than in Sofia, Roncalli experienced that distrust and fear of the Latins whom the Greeks still called “Franks,” carrying on the memory of the sad events of the Fourth Crusade (1204), when Latin forces seeking to drive the Saracens out of the Holy Places of Palestine, vandalized and pillaged Orthodox churches as well. Nor had these ancient folk-memories grown dim with the passage of time. Most recently this antipathy of the Greek people for the Roman Catholic Church, particularly the Italian Church, was renewed when in 1923 Italian forces under Mussolini occupied Corfu, killing many Greek refugees. That same year the Treaty of Lausanne repatriated 2,000 Greek Uniates, descendants of families who had been living in Asia Minor for 2,000 years. Even this relatively small influx of Catholics was seen by the Greek government as a Trojan horse, and only encouraged the Greek fear of the Pope.<sup>12</sup>

Roncalli’s attempts to secure diplomatic relations with Greece failed, and he learned again the sad but important lesson he had learned in Bulgaria, that the difficulty caused by political tension and turmoil in the countries where the majority of the world’s Orthodox faithful live, Russia, Romania, and Greece, greatly impinges on the life of the Orthodox Church, and has to be dealt with, or gotten around, before any fruitful ecumenical progress can be made.

Although his attempts to make progress in official contacts between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches were less than satisfactory, he knew from his experience in Bulgaria that when official meetings with the Orthodox were unsuccessful, some progress, or at least, a more positive atmosphere could be achieved by careful attention to protocol. He had first met with Basil III, Ecumenical Patriarch, in Bulgaria, in 1927, and in Constantinople, in 1936, he sent a representative to the funeral of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Photius II, and congratulations to his successor, Benjamin I. On 27 May 1939, being by then resident in Athens, Roncalli made a personal visit to the Phanar to

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.



announce the election of Pope Pius XII; he was received with every courtesy by Patriarch Benjamin II,<sup>13</sup> and the Patriarch returned the compliment by sending a representative to the *Te Deum* for the election of Pope Pius XII. Roncalli's visit to the Phanar was probably the first visit to have taken place for centuries between an Ecumenical Patriarch and a representative of the Pope, and years later it was said that he had often expressed the wish that his meeting with Benjamin would be the beginning of better relations with the Orthodox.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, he used his time in Constantinople and Greece to learn as much as he could about the Orthodox Church. He visited several monasteries, including a three-day pilgrimage to Mount Athos. He deepened his long-standing appreciation of the Church Fathers, and developed a broader familiarity with the ancient Church by familiarizing himself with the spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches.

But careful observance of diplomatic protocol and private study would hardly justify the appointment or presence of an Apostolic Delegate. Roncalli, all too conscious of the anti-Latin and anti-Italian feeling among the Greeks, with its consequent problems for those Greek citizens who were Roman Catholics, either of the Greek or Latin rite, was always seeking ways to work together with the Orthodox in serving the needs of the people, of which one example must suffice.

In 1941, when everybody in Greece was starving, Roncalli asked the Greek Uniate bishop to sound out the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Damaskinos of Athens for his reaction, should Roncalli request the Vatican to approach the British and American governments for a temporary lifting of the blockade which was preventing food from getting through. This meeting was successful, and the approach by the Holy See was duly made. "In the end, he was able to render the Greeks an important service, by

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<sup>13</sup> Algisi, 144.

<sup>14</sup> Zsolt Aradi, James I. Tucek, and James C. O'Neill, *Pope John XXIII: An Authoritative Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), 171.

negotiating with the Allies a lifting of the blockade, which allowed grain ships to reach the Piraeus during the famine of winter 1941.”<sup>15</sup>

Above all, his experience among the Orthodox gave him a perception of the papacy quite different from that of a Roman Catholic bishop who had never lived or worked outside a predominantly Catholic country. He realized that the papacy could only be intelligible to Orthodox and Protestants if it were seen as a collegial office, the Pope functioning as a bishop among bishops. “In Istanbul he had always tried to act collegially with the bishops of varied rites who shared his ministry.”<sup>16</sup> For he viewed the papacy as distinctly pastoral, and his own style of episcopacy was that of a shepherd to his flock. In this attitude toward the role of the bishop and the pope, Roncalli was greatly influenced by his work with Bishop Radini-Tadeschi and his study of St. Charles Borromeo. Like Radini-Tadeschi who, in 1910, had revived the practice of calling a diocesan synod, Roncalli saw the council or synod as the customary historical and canonically regular way of reviving the Church. Synods form a very central part of the ecclesial structures of Orthodoxy..

Roncalli arrived in Paris at the end of 1944, a few months before the surrender of Germany in May, 1945. For nearly ten years as Papal Nuncio in France, from 1944 to 1953, he was constantly struggling with tense church-state relations, and there was little scope to pursue his interest in the Orthodox Church.<sup>17</sup>

In January of 1953, he was nominated cardinal by Pope Pius XII, and the next month, was transferred to Venice as its new Patriarch. His five years in that city, historically so closely linked with Byzantium, afforded him yet another opportunity to emphasize the ties between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In his first

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Johnson, *Pope John XXIII*, The Library of World Biography, ed. J.H. Plumb (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 58.

<sup>16</sup> Hebblethwaite, 329.

<sup>17</sup> He did however, even in the eventful summer of 1945, preach a major sermon in celebration of the 700th anniversary of the First Council of Lyons, drawing attention to the fact that this had been the first council which had attempted to end the separation of the Greek and Latin Churches. *Ibid.*, 207-8.

speech to the people of Venice on 15 March 1953 he spoke of his humble background, his experience of East and West, his desire to be seen as a brother, and his desire to stress what unites, rather than that which divides..

So in Venice, from 1953 onwards, Roncalli began once again to seize every opportunity to stress points of convergence between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, and did not shrink from voicing his concern at anything which might impede the restoration of unity. When Pope Pius XII proclaimed 1954 the centenary of the definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception as a “Marian Year,” Roncalli was well aware of how this would be viewed by the Orthodox; and although, naturally enough, he celebrated the centenary, he opposed, on ecumenical grounds, the institution of a proposed new Marian feast, to be entitled the Queenship of Mary, writing “. . . [I] fear such a feast could prejudice the great action already undertaken towards the refashioning of the unity of the Catholic Church in the world.”<sup>18</sup>

He made a point, too, of drawing attention to the writings of the first Patriarch of Venice, St. Laurence Justinian (1381-1456), whose approach to theology was biblical, rather than scholastic, combining scripture and Tradition. It is this Orthodox understanding of theology based on Tradition, in which Tradition includes, among other things, the Bible, the Creed and the Councils, which Roncalli was trying to emphasize.<sup>19</sup> This is well stated in the words of Professor John Meyendorff, “that Scripture, while complete in itself, presupposes Tradition, not as an addition, but as a milieu in which it becomes understandable and meaningful.” And further, “In order to be fully understood, the Bible requires the reality of the fellowship which exists in the Church. Tradition is

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy Ware, [Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia], *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1986), 204-5.

the sacramental continuity in history of the communion of saints; in a way, it is the Church itself.”<sup>20</sup>

So throughout his years in Venice, his ecumenical interest in the Orthodox led him to remind his people that in the patristic period, the differences between East and West had not led to schism. It was in Venice, too, when addressing the diocesan Synod in March 1957, that he began to use the term, *aggiornamento*, to stress the need for the Church to update itself. Later that year he wrote to the people of Venice, affirming that the Church “wants to be in a position to understand the diverse circumstances of life so that she can adapt, correct, improve, and be filled with fervour.”<sup>21</sup> In all this, the influence of Borromeo cannot be overestimated.

On 9 October 1958 Pope Pius XII died, and on 28 October Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli was elected Bishop of Rome. In his first speech as Pope, John XXIII “embraced the Orthodox Churches” (quite an astonishingly novel phrase to pronounce at the time), and then swiftly arranged that he should be crowned on 4 November, a Wednesday, rather than the traditional Sunday, because it was the feast of St. Charles Borromeo. In his coronation address Pope John XXIII referred to the role Borromeo had played in restoring order to the Church by his synods in Milan, synods which had showed others how to put into practice the reforms of the Council of Trent, referring to him as “adviser to popes and a wonderful model of episcopal holiness.”<sup>22</sup> And on the day he took possession of his cathedral, St. John Lateran, the new pope stopped en route to visit the tomb of St. Cyril in San Clemente, to show his love and respect for the Christian East. The stage was set for a new approach to the Orthodox Churches.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> John Meyendorff, *Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the Contemporary World* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Hebblethwaite, 264.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>23</sup> Even after he became Pope, Roncalli continued to study and to make notes about Pope Leo the Great (440-61). It was all part of his probing of history for a role of the Pope, seeking to go back beyond the Renaissance and medieval popes to the Patristic era, before the Schism. Leo, whose teaching was accepted by the whole, undivided Church, was an obvious model.

In light of the above, it may seem strange that the Christian world was taken completely by surprise when, on 25 January 1959, John XXIII announced to a small group of Cardinals that he had decided to call an ecumenical Council. Part of the astonishment stemmed from the fact that many journalists interpreted the first press release as meaning that the Pope intended to call a meeting of all the major Christian churches, a misunderstanding that was quickly corrected. But the Cardinals had no such misunderstandings, and they too were truly astounded: probably it is only with hindsight that one can perceive how consistent were the ideas that ran throughout the life of Angelo Roncalli.

But what kind of a Council was it to be? Were the Orthodox to be invited, and if so, were they to be full members, ranking on equal terms with Patriarchs and bishops of the Roman Communion? No one can today doubt what John XXIII would ideally have loved to do, but after his years in Eastern Europe, he was a supreme realist. In fact, thirty years later, ecumenical contacts between Rome and the East are so normal and frequent that it is hard to recognize the breath-taking novelty of his achievement.

For in spite of Pope John XXIII's abiding interest in the Orthodox, and in spite of the favorable reaction to the announcement of the Council by Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras,<sup>24</sup> a full participation by the Orthodox Churches as observers was not to be expected. But after many informal contacts, on 24 July 1962 the Vatican issued a formal invitation to Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras to send Orthodox observers to the Council, mentioning that invitations had also been sent to the other autocephalous Orthodox churches. Presumably either because the Orthodox churches were not unanimous whether to attend the Council or not,<sup>25</sup> or because no reply had been received

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<sup>24</sup> Robert Blair Kaiser, *Pope, Council and World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), 17.

<sup>25</sup> E.J. Stormon, ed. and trans., *Ecumenical Documents III: Towards The Healing of Schism: The Sees of Rome and Constantinople, Public statements and correspondence between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1958-1984*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 42.

from the Moscow Patriarchate stating whether they would send observers,<sup>26</sup> Athenagoras declined the invitation on behalf of the Orthodox Churches, but wrote, “The Ecumenical Patriarchate, together with the individual Orthodox Churches, expresses its best wishes for the success, in the genuine spirit of Christ, of the work of this Council, which the whole Orthodox world will follow with great interest and attention.” On 11 October 1962, the opening day of the Council, the Vatican received notice from the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church that they would send two observers.<sup>27</sup> They arrived the next day.<sup>28</sup>

Pope John XXIII was very well aware of the complexity of inter-relations among the Orthodox Churches. The Ecumenical Patriarch, though holding a primacy of honor among the Orthodox Churches, presided over a church which was much smaller than the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1963 the figures were thought to be 270,000 under the Patriarch of Constantinople and 40,000,000 under that of Moscow.<sup>29</sup> The long-standing rivalry between the Greek and Slavic churches, epitomized in the fact that Moscow came to look on itself as the “third Rome,” could only have been exacerbated by the reality of life in the Russian Church, which was then fighting for its survival under Khrushchev’s attack on the Church.<sup>30</sup> The Vatican’s success in getting the Russian Orthodox to the Council could be attributed in large part to the intense discussions between Monsignor Jan Willebrands and the Moscow Patriarchate in the weeks preceding the opening of the Council. Once assured that the Vatican Council would not engage in anti-communist polemics, it was to the advantage of the Communist government to permit the Russian Orthodox Church to send observers to the Council.<sup>31</sup> To the credit of

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<sup>26</sup> Kaiser, 100.

<sup>27</sup> Storman, 43.

<sup>28</sup> Kaiser, 102.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917-1982*, vol. II, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 327-63.

<sup>31</sup> Kaiser, 100-102.

Patriarch Athenagoras, deeply disappointed at not being able to send observers to the Council, he understood the political reality of the Russian Church. For, having received the news of the arrival of the Russian observers in Rome, he wrote to Patriarch Alexei in Moscow, expressing his “love and understanding.”<sup>32</sup>

Although Pope John did not live to see the close of the Council, it was natural that Pope Paul VI would build his predecessor’s careful preparation, and soon after his election on 23 June 1963, he continued the correspondence between the Vatican and the Phanar. Paul wrote his first personal letter to Athenagoras on 20 September 1963,<sup>33</sup> and in less than four months they had circumvented all the difficulties of precedent and protocol to hold their historic meeting in Jerusalem on 5 January 1964.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>33</sup> Storman 52.

**PART I:  
THE LETTERS OF POPE PAUL VI (1963-1974)**



## Chapter 2

### The Early Letters (1965-1966)

The story of the debate at the Second Vatican Council about the place of Mary in Catholic doctrine has often been told, and lies outside the scope of this thesis, which is concerned only with strictly papal documents; but for that very reason, because we are concerned with papal documents, a short introduction must deal with one very closely related point from that Council.

In the final week of the first period (December 1962), the Council Fathers were asked to decide whether to begin discussion of the very long draft document on the Church, or to discuss a much shorter document concerning the Virgin Mary (in the not unfounded hope that the debate might well be finished and the document accepted in principle). The majority, however, decided to begin with discussion of the Church, thus leaving ample time for an unhurried examination of the Marian document during the recess and in later sessions.

Nine months later, after the election of Cardinal Montini to the papacy, the Council reconvened, and one of its first tasks was to decide whether the Catholic doctrine about Mary should be treated in that short, separate, document, or whether it should be included (as had been originally envisaged), in the document on the Church. By a small but sufficient majority (1114 against 1074, with five papers null) the Council voted that the draft on Mary should be part of the decree on the Church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), xi.

The short draft document which had been put forward in December 1962 was again presented, unchanged, to the reconvened Council in October 1963. But a new problem arose.

Originally the title read, “On the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Men”, which was both soundly orthodox and theological. When the schema was presented during the second session, the text was as it had been at the end of the first session, but the title proved to have been altered --by what authority is not quite clear-- and now read: “On the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church”. Those who undertook to make the change may have had the idea that the connection between Mariology and ecclesiology ought to appear in the very title. But even assuming that title “Mother of the Church” can be interpreted in a correct sense, the question remains whether “Church” is here used in the Catholic sense.<sup>2</sup> If most of the Fathers voted against this title for the schema--not against the doctrine that Our Lady is the mother of the faithful--it was not in the interests of Mariological minimalism but in the interests of sound theological terminology.<sup>3</sup>

During the following year, a thorough revision of the text was carried out, and on 29 October 1964 it was approved by 1559 votes to 10 against; but of the 521 who voted *Placet iuxta modum* (“Yes, but with the following reservation . . .”), 24 still wanted some form of the title “Mother of the Church.” Feelings ran strong, and the differences were to persist, and this may well have induced Pope Paul to offer the disappointed minority some satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> The majority had their way when the title was worded with doctrinal precision, “The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and of the Church” (which describes the chapter exactly); and the minority had their consolation on the same day that this decree was formally enacted, 21 November 1964, when in response to their pleas, Paul declared that Mary, the Mother of Christ, might legitimately be invoked as “Mother of the Church.” It was, as he pointed out, quite a succinct way of expressing Mary’s spiritual motherhood of the Christian

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<sup>2</sup> The English of this sentence is obviously so stilted as to be confusing, Dr. McHugh advises that a more accurate and less misleading translation of the German original would be “But even if it be granted that the title ‘Mother of the Church’ can be understood in a sense which is theologically correct. . . .” The original reads: “Aber selbst wenn zugegeben wird, daß der Titel ‘Mutter der Kirche’ theologisch korrekt verstanden kann” : *Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Kommentare, Teil I*, in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1966), 327.

<sup>3</sup> O. Semmelroth, in his commentary on Chapter 8 of the Decree on the Church, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.I (London-New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 286.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

faithful in a manner comprehensible to them all.<sup>5</sup> This was Pope Paul's first intervention on a matter of Marian practice, and one must note that it was a very open attempt to forestall hard feelings arising among rather traditionalist Roman Catholics as a result of a conciliar approach which was, for the first time, looking also to the effect the Council's decrees would produce on other Christians.

Before moving to Paul's first Marian letter, we may briefly note a short Papal statement, *La cerimonia dell'offerta*,<sup>6</sup> made on the Feast of the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, 2 February 1965. In it, Paul stresses the Christocentric direction of Marian devotion, but even in this short address, at this early date, he introduces several of the major concepts which will find fruition in his longest and final Marian statement, *Marialis Cultus*, to be released nine years later, on 2 February 1974. In the second paragraph, he speaks of Mary, devotion to whom "links us with the oldest and most venerable Eastern and Latin liturgies . . ." (101), reiterates that it was a wise decision to insert the chapter on Mary in the Constitution on the Church, and then immediately refers to the title, "Mother of the Church"(103). In the same paragraph, he refers to her as "*Theotokos*," serving as a focus for unity. He calls Mary "Mother of Unity," and he says, "not only all the Catholics who are already close to her as children" but also "God willing, all Christians as well, including those still separated from us" (104).

This may not seem much, but it must be remembered that during and immediately after the Council Pope Paul VI was an exceptionally busy man. First came the gigantic task of ensuring that Roman Catholics were adequately informed of what the Council had decided, and then the equally daunting task of convincing or persuading them that these decisions were wise. This ecclesiastical background is essential to

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<sup>5</sup> TPS 10 (1965): 138-9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 101-5.

understand his earlier letters in the period preceding his major and final work on the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Marialis Cultus* (1973).

At the same time, it is important to remember also that this period corresponds exactly with the years of the war in Vietnam, 1965-1973, for the historical background, too, throws light on his earlier Marian documents, from the end of the Council to MC.

In October 1964 Soviet Prime Minister and Party Secretary Khrushchev was ousted and replaced by A.N. Kosygin and L. I. Brezhnev, and the day after Khrushchev was removed, Communist China exploded its first atomic device, further shifting the world's changing balance of power.<sup>7</sup> Hence it is not surprising that in the United States, many worried whether a third World War might not be provoked by the U.S. bombing raids in Vietnam which sometimes came as close as 10 miles to the Chinese border. In a public audience in Rome, Paul VI, referring to the conflict in Vietnam, urged leaders to act to save mankind from the horrors of nuclear war,<sup>8</sup> and in a letter to the Roman Catholic bishops of Vietnam on 20 February 1965, disclosed that he had tried to make confidential direct personal contact with various governments involved in Vietnam and elsewhere to urge peace. It is with this world crisis in mind that we must look at Pope Paul VI's first encyclical on Mary, *Mense Maio*.

### **The Encyclical Letter *Mense Maio*<sup>9</sup> (29 April 1965)**

Pope Paul VI recalls the custom of earlier Popes asking Catholics to pray for the needs of the Church and the world, and especially of asking for public prayer to Mary during the month of May,<sup>10</sup> or in time of special need.

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<sup>7</sup> John W. Finney, "China Tests Atomic Bomb, Asks Summit talk on Ban; Johnson Minimizes Peril," *New York Times*, 17 Oct. 1964, p. 1 (L).

<sup>8</sup> "Peace in Vietnam is Sought by Pope," *New York Times*, 21 Feb 1965, sec. 1, p. 1 (L).

<sup>9</sup> TPS 10 (1965): 220-24.

<sup>10</sup> Paul VI mentions the custom of dedicating the month of May to "Mary, the Mother of God" (220). This custom, has grown within the last 200 years, largely to counter pagan customs connected with the springtime by reminding them of Mary, the chaste virgin-mother. (See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913, vol. 10, 542-43, "Months," by F. G. Holweck.)

Paul VI first asks that Catholics should entreat Mary's prayers for the final session of the Second Vatican Council, and his words about the title, Mary, "*Mother of the Church*" (221, italics in the original), deserve a short comment. When he says, "From the very start of the Council she has given us her loving help, and she will surely stay with us until the task is finished" (221), it is to supply a gentle reminder that the title is but another way of expressing the doctrine of Mary's spiritual motherhood of all Christians, which has always been accepted by all Catholics, on the basis of Jn 19:25-27.

The second reason Paul VI gives for invoking Mary's intercession is the threat to world peace: here he is referring not only to Vietnam, but also to the conflict occurring between India and Pakistan, and in the Dominican Republic. Much of the letter is then given to urging world leaders to resort to every possible sort of negotiation to attain justice and peace, to lessen tensions and to avoid war.

But, he stresses, peace is a gift from God, not solely the work of man, and as such, must be both prayed for and worked for. He urges "praying, in particular, for the intercession and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is Queen of Peace" (223). One may note here that Paul changes from "Mary, Mother of the Church," when appealing for prayers for God's blessing on the Council, to "Mary, Queen of Peace," when praying for God to grant the world the gift of peace. He concludes with a call for "special prayers in every diocese and parish during the month of May; in particular, on the feast of the Queenship of Mary," and asks for recitation of the Rosary (224).

MM was announced by the *New York Times* as a "plea for peace," and the Marian aspects of it were only briefly mentioned in an article on the front page which accompanied a copy of the full text of the encyclical.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Doty, "Papal Encyclical a Plea for Peace," *New York Times*, 1 May 1965, sec. 1, p. 1 (L).

**The Encyclical Letter *Christi Matri*<sup>12</sup>  
(15 September 1966)**

In this short encyclical letter Pope Paul asks for earnest prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary during October 1966. He particularly requests that the Rosary be said for peace in the Far East, again dwelling on the titles “Mother of the Church” and “Queen of Peace”<sup>13</sup>

The Rosary, which originated as a substitute for the 150 Psalms, consists of one *Pater Noster* followed by ten *Ave Maria's* and one *Gloria Patri*, repeated either five or fifteen times while meditating upon the principal mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ and of his mother. It was among the popular devotions connected with the public functions of the medieval Church.<sup>14</sup> After the victory of the Christian fleet at Lepanto in 1571, the Dominican Pope, Pius V, established an annual (optional) feast to be observed on the anniversary of the battle, 7 October, under the title “Saint Mary of the Victory”; the title was changed by his successor, Gregory XIII (1572-85), to the Feast of the Rosary.<sup>15</sup> In later centuries, the relief of Vienna in 1683, and the victories over the Turks (by Prinz Eugen) which led in 1716 to the liberation of Hungary and in 1717 to the capture of Belgrade, seemed to complete the removal of the Turkish threat to (Western) Christendom, and were by many attributed to the practice of the Rosary. In consequence, the feast was in 1716 extended to the entire Latin rite.<sup>16</sup>

As the official liturgy in Latin became increasingly remote from the largely illiterate populations, it became not unusual, by way of compensation for the rather

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<sup>12</sup> TPS 11 (1966): 221-25.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Paul VI did not write an encyclical on Vietnam. CM, however, was taken to be such an encyclical by the secular press, and was even referred to as his encyclical on peace. An editorial in the *New York Times* written on the day of the release of the encyclical is titled: “The Pope Looks at Vietnam.” Nowhere in the editorial is there a mention of Mary.

<sup>14</sup> See Detached Note A, “The Rosary.”

<sup>15</sup> Kelly, s.v. “Gregory XIII.”

<sup>16</sup> See André Duval, “La dévotion mariale dans l’ordre des Frères prêcheurs,” 737-82 in H. du Manoir, ed., *Maria: Etudes sur la sainte Vierge* II (Paris, Beauchesne, 1952), 779 and fn. 217 and 221.

distant liturgy, to dedicate entire months to special popular devotions,<sup>17</sup> and the custom of encouraging the Rosary during the month of October, to which Pope Paul VI refers, was officially introduced by Pope Leo XIII when, by an Encyclical of 1 September 1883 he ordered the feast of the Holy Rosary to be kept on the first Sunday in October. Leo, by dedicating the month of October to Mary under the title of Queen of the Holy Rosary, was responding in a purely spiritual way to the seizure and confiscation of the Papal States in 1860, and of the city of Rome in 1870, praying that God would protect and defend His Church in its sufferings, and for 19 years he published an annual encyclical on this subject.

Leo also introduced what is to the modern Catholic one of the most bizarre para-liturgical practices ever known, yet which persisted in the Latin Church for about eighty years, from 1885 to 1965, though many were unhappy about it.

By the decree of the Congregation of Rites (20 Aug., 1885; 26 Aug., 1886; 2 Sept., 1887) he ordained that every year during the entire month of October, including the first and second of November, in every cathedral and parochial church, and in all other churches and chapels which are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, five decades of the Rosary and the Litany of Loreto are to be recited, in the morning during Mass or in the afternoon whilst the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and by the encyclical letter of 15 August, 1889, a prayer in honour of St. Joseph was added.<sup>18</sup>

All this may seem quite extraordinary today, but it was only 13 years since the ending of the centuries of papal rule in Rome, and not all Catholics were happy with the new, secular and masonic Italy. It was in fact a big step forward in the Church's history that Leo should put all his faith in prayer rather than in an alliance; and one needs this background to appreciate fully the nuances of Paul VI's writing on the Rosary.

Paul particularly urges the praying of the Rosary in honor of the "Mother of Christ." He says, "For the danger of a more serious and extensive calamity hangs over the human family and has increased, especially in parts of eastern Asia where a bloody

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<sup>17</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Holweck. 542.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

and hard-fought war is raging.” He also mentions “the growing nuclear armaments race, the senseless nationalism, the racism,<sup>19</sup> the obsession for revolution, the separations imposed upon citizens, the nefarious plots, the slaughter of innocent people. All of these can furnish material for the greatest calamity” (221). In introducing these references into an encyclical on the Rosary, Paul is setting these contemporary tragedies into the long historical context of Lepanto, of Jan Sobieski and of Prinz Eugen, and remembering how he himself, as a chaplain to university students in the early years of Italian Fascism, had seen all too clearly where senseless nationalism, racism and obsession with revolution would ultimately lead.

The *New York Times* carried an article about the encyclical on its front page on 20 September. The full text was published, as well as a major editorial titled, “The Pope Looks at Vietnam.”<sup>20</sup> That same article notes that Paul’s words could have been referring to South African apartheid, Ku Klux Klan cross burning, or the “black power” concept in the United States. The “nefarious plots, the slaughter of innocent people,” could have been occasioned by the recent assassination of Dr. Verwoerd and the fatal bombings and shootings in Italy’s German-speaking Bolzano Province.<sup>21</sup>

In the face of all this, the Pope boldly asserts that peace can only be gained from Christ, “the Prince of Peace,” and then moves into his passage about Mary. The Church, “in uncertain and anxious times, has been accustomed to have recourse to that most ready intercessor, her Mother Mary” (223): it is easy to see that if she is truly “Mother of

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<sup>19</sup> The beginning of 1965 is filled with such events. In January, Martin Luther King was attacked by a white man in Selma, Alabama, and a few weeks later, was arrested there for his public civil rights demonstrations. In February the home of Malcolm X, a Black Muslim leader, was fire bombed by an opposition group of Black leaders. A few days later he was shot to death in New York City while addressing a rally of followers. Ku Klux Klan violence erupted in Selma following a demonstration of 4,000 civil rights demonstrators led by King. Severe race riots in the Watts district of Los Angeles resulted in the death of 35, the arrest of 4,000, and \$40,000,000 property damage. Particular details of this type are frequently extremely useful to interpret Paul’s writings.

<sup>20</sup> Robert C. Doty, “Pope Directs a ‘Cry’ for Peace to World Leaders,” *New York Times*, 20 Sept. 1966, p.1 (L).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



Christ,” she may be rightly invoked as “Queen of Peace”( 223). This latter title was added at the end of the Litany of Loreto in 1917-18 by Benedict XV.

But he also refers to Mary, “Mother of the Church,” recalling that his title had already been used by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Adiutricem populi christiani* (5 September 1895), and was therefore not by any means entirely new in Roman Catholic tradition. In calling for the Rosary during the month of October, he notes not only that this is an established practice, but that the Second Vatican Council indirectly recommended the Rosary in LG§67, “Let them value highly the pious practices and exercises directed to the Blessed Virgin and approved over the centuries by the magisterium”(224).

He asks the bishops to celebrate a Day of Prayer for Peace on 4 October, the first anniversary of his trip to the United Nations, during that month of October, which is dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. The prayer should be for peace throughout the world, and for religious peace as well, for he notes, “not everyone is allowed to profess his religion freely in this age” (224). He concludes with a prayer to the Most Blessed Virgin, asking her to protect the bishops who “fear that their flocks will be tormented by a terrible storm of evils,” to hear the anguish of parents who are worried about what the future holds, to “soothe the minds of those at war.” He asks that God, through Mary’s intercession, may bring the world to peace and prosperity (224). These are themes which would have been equally urgent for Christians in 1571 or 1683. But the Church’s manner of replying has changed.

It is important to note that up to this point, these papal documents on Mary have been concerned with urging Roman Catholics to practice traditional Marian devotions, especially the Rosary, during the months of May and October for two specific intentions: the success of the Vatican Council and for world peace. It is of equal importance to note that in writing that the Church, “in uncertain and anxious times, has been accustomed to have recourse to that most ready intercessor, her Mother Mary” (223), Pope Paul is using

the term 'Church' not in its exact theological sense (for his statement is quite untrue of most Protestants) but simply as a synonym for the Roman Communion.

Yet the Second Vatican Council, anxious to reject any definition which would equate the Church of Christ on earth with the Roman Catholic Communion, stated only that there is but one Church of Christ, which in this world "*subsists in* the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him."<sup>22</sup> Thus refusing to endorse the teaching of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*, §§39-40,<sup>23</sup> which was based on the theology of Robert Bellarmine,<sup>24</sup> Pope Paul VI, like John XXIII before him, is in this letter still treading a very traditionalist path according to preconiliar customs and practices in the Latin Rite, and using what may be called "in-house" terminology. But from this point onward, things start to change.

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<sup>22</sup> LG1, §8.

<sup>23</sup> Contrast chapter 1, p. 2, to see the implications of this conciliar decision.

<sup>24</sup> See chapter 1, fn. 1.

## Chapter 3

### First Rays of Ecumenical Dawn (1967-1973)

To many outside the Roman Church, it seemed that Roman Catholicism had, during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, placed Mary in a category of her own, and exalted her to an extent which a very large number of Protestants found offensive. Indeed, the formal definition (in 1854) of Mary's total freedom from sin seemed to many of them to have elevated her to a status where she did not need to be redeemed.<sup>1</sup> The Orthodox, too, were suspicious of the extent to which Marian doctrine and devotion was being separated from Jesus, the Son of God, and her Son. So, there was criticism on two grounds, and once the Roman Catholic Church had committed itself to serious ecumenical dialogue with Protestantism and Orthodoxy, these two issues had to be addressed. At the same time, Pope Paul had to deal with Roman Catholics who felt that the pious customs of a lifetime were under threat, by reassuring them that there was no change in doctrine. So, there was tension from three sides, and broadly speaking, Paul VI was expected to say something about the Virgin Mary which would satisfy Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox.

These factors must be taken into account when we come to the next document to be examined, *Signum Magnum*, in which we shall find a distinct and deliberate move away from the world and the style of earlier Popes: even John XXIII had simply taken for

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<sup>1</sup> Any Catholic will confirm that sermons on the Immaculate Conception of Mary rarely placed equal stress on the fact that her sinlessness was "by a unique grace and privilege of God, and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Savior of the human race," which is an essential part of the papal definition of 1854. This all too common failure in preaching provided ample justification for Protestant misunderstanding of the doctrine.

granted the older traditional ways. But the debates at the Council had instigated, enabled and encouraged Paul VI to take a new line in his post-conciliar teachings, by assuring him that if he did abandon many of the older customs, without innovation in doctrine, he would truly be speaking on behalf of the great majority of the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. In this document, he begins to spell out the implications for Marian devotion.

Certainly, there is a definite change in tone in this document, probably because of the increasingly frequent contact between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I.<sup>2</sup> The volume of correspondence alone indicates a new level of dialogue between the Church in Rome and the Church in Constantinople after the Jerusalem meeting in January 1964; by 1965 there were 49 official exchanges; by 1967, 61.<sup>3</sup>

More important, the status of exchanges also rose. Patriarch Athenagoras was to send a delegation to Rome to represent him on 29 June 1967 at the nineteenth centenary celebration of the Martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>4</sup> Pope Paul responded by announcing his desire to visit Athenagoras at the Phanar on 25 July (their first meeting on the Mount of Olives had been on neutral ground). By visiting the Patriarch in Istanbul, the Pope was indicating the seriousness of his intentions in this dialogue,<sup>5</sup> and making it politically possible for Patriarch Athenagoras to return the courtesy by traveling to visit the Pope in Rome on 26 October 1967.<sup>6</sup> It was in this context that *Signum Magnum* was released, on 13 May 1967, just two months before Pope Paul VI was to visit Patriarch Athenagoras I in the Phanar.

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<sup>2</sup> Since their meeting in Jerusalem on 4-6 January 1964, contacts with the Orthodox Churches had increased dramatically, and at the final formal session of the Council, on 7 December 1965, the mutual excommunications of 1054 were lifted. Dana Adams Schmidt, "Pope and Orthodox Leader Meet and Open 'Door' to Co-operation; Pontiff calls for United Church," *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1964, p.1 (L); Edward Yarnold, *They Are In Earnest* (Middlegreen, England: St. Paul Publications, 1982), 53-54.

<sup>3</sup> Storman, 528-33.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

The occasion chosen for issuing this letter was the fiftieth anniversary of an alleged apparition of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, a town in Portugal, about 60 miles north of Lisbon. There, it is claimed, three small children had visions of the Virgin Mary on the 13th of each month from May to October in 1917, accompanied on one occasion by atmospheric phenomena (which many others witnessed). The message was of the need for penance, of encouragement to use the rosary, and to pray for Russia. Public prayer has been authorized there from 1930 onwards, and it is now a much frequented place of pilgrimage. Indeed, Fatima, with its stress on veneration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, may be said to epitomize the style of Marian devotion assiduously favored by Pope Pius XII.

**The Apostolic Exhortation *Signum Magnum* <sup>7</sup>  
(13 May 1967)**

The Incipit of this document, *Signum magnum*, “A great sign appeared in heaven . . .” (Rv 12: 1), and its date, 13 May 1967, are obviously meant as a reference to Fatima, on the fiftieth anniversary of the vision of Mary. Though there is clearly a (semi-playful?) reference to the strange atmospheric disturbances of July 1917, the main reference is to the fact that this text of Revelation has, in the Roman Liturgy, been applied to the Virgin Mary. But the main thrust of the document lies elsewhere. In the English version, the title reads “Mary, Mother of the Church: On venerating and imitating the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and model of all virtues.”

The first thing to note is that *Signum magnum* is entitled an Apostolic Exhortation, not an Encyclical. Though the document is addressed to all bishops in communion with the See of Rome, the change in title indicates that Paul is not now speaking to them as one who has authority, but rather as one bishop sharing thoughts with

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<sup>7</sup> TPS 12 (1967): 278-86.

others.<sup>8</sup> The tone is consequently different too, and we can perceive in its style the beginning of “post-conciliar dialogue” with Eastern Christians in general and with Protestants.

After the short paragraph about the title, the introduction falls into three main paragraphs which map out the main message. The first of these begins by carefully defining the precise sense of the title “the spiritual Mother of the Church: that is, of all Christians and their pastors.” Paul then reminds his readers of the celebration which followed the proclamation of the title *Theotokos* at the Council of Ephesus, saying that similar rejoicing had greeted the proclamation of the title Mother of the Church. His words about the rejoicing over the title “Mother of the Church” may seem extravagant in their optimism, given the controversy surrounding this title at the Vatican Council, but we should not forget that there was equal discontent at Ephesus. It is at first puzzling to know why he mentions Ephesus at all, for it seems quite unconnected with the theme of the letter (and this would be most uncharacteristic for Paul VI); it seems equally strange that the theme of Fatima, briefly mentioned once in the second long paragraph, then disappears until the last page of the letter. One must ask, what is happening?

If we recall the impending visit of Pope Paul to Constantinople, and the return of the courtesy planned for October, we can see why Pope Paul begins by recalling the rejoicing at Ephesus over the title of *Theotokos* : it is almost certainly because he wishes to signal to the Eastern Churches that this term, not any other, is the foundation for all Marian devotion. So, Pope Paul VI, in SM, though speaking directly only to the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church, knows that what he says will also be heard and scrutinized by the Orthodox because of the increased contact. It is also possible to say that he is taking the lead from Pope John XXIII, who, as we have noted, always

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<sup>8</sup> Note that from this point Paul VI uses Apostolic Exhortations for his Marian documents; John Paul II will revert to encyclicals. The difference is between sharing thoughts with bishops informally, and a more authoritative and formal letter (cf. Francis.G. Morrissey, *The Canonical Significance of Papal and Curial Pronouncements* [Washington D.C.: Catholic University, The Canon Law Society of America, 2d printing, 1981] 2-3).

maintained that the key to unity with the Orthodox would be through Mariology. In spite of centuries of theological quarrels, their common heritage of the *Theotokos* (Mother of God) remained.

Secondly, while referring to the ceremonies taking place at Fatima, he reaffirms that the spiritual motherhood of Mary rests entirely on the fact that she is “mother of God and of our Redeemer,” “mother of the Incarnate Word and of the mystical body.” To those familiar with the code-language of Catholicism, this is another way of saying that Mary’s spiritual motherhood does not rest on any private apparitions, however genuine, which do not form part of divine revelation. Then he reminds “all members of the Church of the close and enduring connection between Mary’s spiritual motherhood-- spelled out so clearly in *Lumen Gentium* and the duties of all redeemed men toward her as Mother of the Church” (279). One objection had been that this title was novel in Catholic teaching, and unhelpful to ecumenical dialogue. Paul points out with eight quotations that LG8 bases Marian devotion on the Bible, the Church, the Fathers, and pronouncements of recent popes, and that there is a logical link between the Second Vatican Council’s statement on Mary and his own proclamation of her as “Mother of the Church” (279). Here he is replying to his Catholic critics: no Catholic rejects the idea of Mary’s spiritual motherhood, emphatically taught in LG. How then can one reject the idea that, as she is Mother of the Head, so she is also Mother of the members of the Church?<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, he moves to the practical implications. Aware of the tension between those who wish to reduce the role of Marian devotion, especially in the liturgical reform

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<sup>9</sup> There is, of course, the obvious difficulty, when speaking of Mary as “Mother of the Church,” that she is, in fact, herself a member of the Church. And how can she be mother of herself? But in traditional Catholic worship, it has been quite customary to regard Mary as being in one sense Mother of Christ, and in another, metaphorical sense, Mother of Christians, on the basis of Jn 19:25-27. Paul clearly thinks that the overwhelming majority of Catholics will understand “Mother of the Church” as an abbreviation for “Mother of the members of the Church.”

following the Second Vatican Council, and those who feared this, or wanted to re-emphasize and increase the cult of Mary, he writes:

There is no need to fear that the reform of the liturgy--so long as it is carried out in accordance with the formula, "lex credendi legem statuat supplicandi"--might work to the detriment of the "altogether singular" cult that is due to the most holy Virgin Mary because of her special privileges (her role as Mother of God being the pre-eminent one). Nor, on the other hand, should anyone fear that liturgical or private devotion to the Mother of God could obscure or diminish "the cult of adoration offered to the Word Incarnate, the Father, and the Holy Spirit"<sup>10</sup> (279-80).

That said, he concludes this introduction by affirming that he does not intend to speak about the entire body of doctrine about Mary in the economy of salvation or her relations with the Church. Rather, he wishes to stress two important principles of faith, Mary is both mother and model, and we must actively imitate her.

The first main section of SM, on Mary as mother and model, goes to the heart of the differences between Catholicism and Orthodoxy on the one side, and Protestantism on the other. Frequently quoting LG, Paul VI writes,

Mary is the Mother of the Church--not only because she is the mother of Jesus Christ and His closest associate in "the new economy . . . when the Son of God takes on human nature from her in order to free men from sin by the mysteries of His flesh"; but also because she "shines as the model of virtues for the whole community of the elect" (LG§66).

His argument is this, that just as human mothers must continue to nourish and educate their offspring after giving birth, so, too, does the Blessed Virgin Mary (280). So Mary can be said to have had a share in her Son's sacrifice, the cause of our redemption, and Christ designated her the mother of John the Apostle, but also of the human race, which John represented. She continues this role in heaven, "helping to nourish and foster the divine life in the souls of redeemed men. This truth is a most consoling one, and God in His wisdom has made it an integral part of the mystery of human salvation. Hence all Christians must hold to it in faith" (280).

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<sup>10</sup> "Let the norm of belief determine the norm of worship." (Quoted from Pius XII, Encyclical, *Mediator Dei*: AAS 39 [1947], 541); LG§66



“All Christians” may seem to many Protestant readers a rather far-fetched interpretation of this text; but it must not be forgotten that the more one questions or denies that the Fourth Gospel gives a true and faithful record of historical happenings, the more certain it becomes that the author’s intention was to teach truth symbolically. To put it another way, if the mother of Jesus was not in fact present at the foot of the cross, but was put there by the author, who (without historical justification) “made up” the scene about Jesus’ mother and the disciple whom he loved, then he did this for what was to him a very important doctrinal reason, and Pope Paul’s argument is made even stronger. The disciple does in truth stand for “all Christians,” and it is on the strength of this text that Mary may be called mother and model.<sup>11</sup>

Next, Paul speaks about Mary’s intercession, and in so doing, he speaks first to the Eastern Churches, saying that “from its earliest days the Church has always been thoroughly convinced that Mary intercedes unceasingly before her Son for the sake of God’s People” (281). He quotes the ancient hymn to Mary, found in liturgical use in both the Eastern Church and Western Church, and referred to in LG8 §66): “We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin.”

This hymn, referred to as the *Sub tuum praesidium*, is one of the earliest known prayers to Mary, and the first known instance of a prayer expressing the belief in the intercessory power of the Mother of God. It was long considered in the West to be a medieval prayer, until the publication in 1938 of a Greek papyrus from the John Rylands Library (Rylands Papyrus no. 470),<sup>12</sup> dated from the third or fourth century, which was swiftly identified (1939) as a very ancient version of a Greek hymn used in the Byzantine

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<sup>11</sup> I owe this observation to my tutor.

<sup>12</sup> In the *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri*, vol. 3, in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, ed. C.H. Roberts, (Manchester 1938), pp. 46-47 and Plate I.

liturgy.<sup>13</sup> The hymn was reconstructed by one scholar as, “Under your mercy, we take refuge, Mother of God, do not reject our supplications in necessity. But deliver us from all danger. [You] alone chaste, alone blessed.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition, as it has a shared liturgical tradition in both the East and the West, it serves Paul’s purpose of attracting the interest of the Orthodox Churches. It has a further special significance to the Slavic churches where, as in all the Churches of the Byzantine liturgical tradition, it is sung after daily Vespers during Great Lent. We shall meet it again in the Marian encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*.<sup>15</sup>

In the next paragraph, Paul then addresses the most frequently voiced Protestant objection to the veneration of Mary, that it takes away from Christ. He says, “Mary’s maternal intercession takes nothing at all away from the efficacy of Christ our Saviour, which holds the predominant place and for which there is no substitute.” In fact, Mary’s intercession derives from Christ’s intercession, and is the “clearest demonstration of it” (281: LG§62). As statements, these would be pleasing enough to Protestants, but not necessarily convincing, for some might find it hard to see how Mary’s intercession is the “clearest demonstration” of Christ’s intercession.

It is not merely that in heaven her supplications are unceasing, for although she “enjoys the vision of the Blessed Trinity, she does not forget her children who now are engaged in the “pilgrimage of faith.” This phrase, “pilgrimage of faith” is taken from

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<sup>13</sup> By a monk of Chevetogne, F. Mercenier, in the Louvain journal of Oriental Studies *Le Muséon* 52 (1939): 229-33.

<sup>14</sup> Michael O’Carroll, *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, rev. ed. with supplement (Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), s.v., “*Sub tuum*”; See also John McHugh, “The Earliest Known Invocation of the Mother of God: Reflections on Rylands Papyrus 470,” (Campion Hall, Oxford: Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, January 1981). McHugh dates it between 360 and 450.

<sup>15</sup> Fr. Paul Lazor, instructor of liturgics at St. Vladimir’s translated it from Slavonic for me:  
 Beneath your compassion,  
 We take refuge, Virgin Theotokos.  
 Despise not our prayers,  
 in our necessity (affliction)  
 but deliver us from harm,  
 O only pure, only blessed one.

Chapter 8 of LG, and the culmination of Mary's own pilgrimage of faith is at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25). Since Mary was there so closely united, through her faith, with her suffering Son, Jesus Christ, who "lives always to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25), she in heaven sees her children in God and understands their needs; so she offers herself as their "Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix." (281).<sup>16</sup> Mary's assistance to the Church is not merely by way of intercession; her example, like that of any human mother bringing up her children, also carries great power (281). For Mary's outstanding holiness was not just a gift from God, but also a result of her freely following the Holy Spirit. This co-operation between nature and grace "gave honor to the Blessed Trinity and made her the crowning glory of the Church" (282). All this, of course is taken for granted by Catholic and Orthodox alike, but Paul VI is now turning to scripture, to present Mary as the exemplar of faith.

In the first paragraph he takes an approach which would speak directly to Protestants, who usually insist on allowing Mary honor only insofar as it can be justified by a direct reference in the Bible. Mary's reply to Gabriel's announcement that she would be the Mother of the Son of God, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38) is evidence of her total obedience and her faith, and closes the story of the Annunciation. From that moment, says Paul VI, Mary "devoted herself wholly to serving not only her heavenly Father and the Incarnate Word, but also the whole human race, inasmuch as she realized that Jesus would free his people from the bonds of sin and would be the king of a universal, imperishable messianic kingdom" (282). This may not be critical exegesis, but the "devotional interpretation" of scripture is shared by the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, which are quite happy to cite Church Fathers and Councils as authorities, and to interpret one book of the Bible by another. It

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<sup>16</sup> Note that all three references in this paragraph (Jn 19: 25, Heb 7: 25 and the four titles of Mary) come from LG8. The last three titles are all relatively recent creations, beginning with Pope Leo XII in 1895-1896, and ending with Pope Pius XII in 1946.

all depends on how seriously one takes Jn 19:25-27, which is all about Mary as the exemplar of faith.

Hence, the second point which Paul VI makes in this document is that neither Christ's grace nor Mary's intercession and example will bring the faithful to salvation without their consciously imitating her virtues. Again, speaking in terms which would directly address Protestant objections against the prominence of Mary in the life of the Catholic Church, Paul says that the imitation of Jesus Christ is of course the foremost path to holiness, and that the Catholic Church has always held this, but then adds that the imitation of the Virgin Mary, rather than turning us away from the imitation of Christ, "makes it easier and more pleasant" (283). He turns to scripture (Mt 12:50) to support this statement, saying that Mary was the first to merit Christ's praise for doing His will.

He goes further in this vein, taking up an aphorism which is used by some Catholics and which causes deep distress to Protestants, namely, "To Jesus through Mary." Paul VI argues this is a logical way of imitating Christ, and that it "does not demean our dignity, nor does it slacken the ties of necessity and friendship which bind us to Christ" (284). "For she stands out among men as the shining and most appropriate example of the perfect obedience we should freely and lovingly give to the dictates of our eternal Father" (284). In other words, she is "the most appropriate example" of obedience given to God by a merely human being, as distinct from Jesus Christ, who was truly God as well as truly man. This leads him to write of her as the new Eve, alongside the new Adam, the daughter of, the crown of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New. Thus, from discussing an objection from the Reformed tradition, Paul's thought moves back through Scripture into tradition, so that he ends by speaking language which appeals immediately to the Eastern Orthodox.

He emphasizes the importance of Mary's faith in Christ in her holiness, and as St. Augustine pointed out, "Her motherly closeness to Christ would have meant nothing

if she had not carried Christ more happily in her heart than in her womb.’<sup>17</sup> This is the basis of Catholic practice in seeing Mary as an example and model: that where Jesus was conscious of his own unique relationship with God the Father, Mary was not. Jesus had knowledge of his divine sonship; Mary, like the rest of mankind, had to believe, and is therefore the model for faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Thus he is able to conclude this section by again calling Mary, “the Mother of the Church,” writing, “Throughout the centuries men of faith and love have called her blessed, (he refers to the Magnificat, Lk 1:46-55) and we do well to accept her invitation” (284).

Paul then moves to thoughts on Mary’s message for today. There is a reference to the Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception (“free from original sin and possessed outstanding holiness”) implying that this ought to inspire us to imitate her example. Then he quotes St. Bernard, “Coming to her, the Holy Spirit filled her with grace for herself; when the same Spirit pervaded her again, she became superabundant and overflowing with grace for us also.”<sup>18</sup> These phrases would certainly not appeal to Protestants, but might reassure Catholics gathering at Fatima. He concludes by affirming that Mary’s enduring relevance in the past, present and future, is “backed up by the testimony of the Gospels and Catholic tradition,” because “she is tied by an enduring and indissoluble bond to the mystery of the Mystical Body” (285).

In the very last section, he chooses language which would appeal not only to Catholics, but also to Protestants and then to Orthodox. He says that the doctrine of the Church on the cult of praise, thanksgiving and love of Mary “is fully in accord with the teachings of the Gospel.” He then says “These teachings were interpreted and spelled out more clearly by Eastern and Western church traditions” (286).

For the first time in these papal documents on the Blessed Virgin, the Pope specifically states that he has written not only to Catholics, but also to others who,

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<sup>17</sup> *Serm.* 215, 1: PL 38, 1074, cited by Paul VI.

<sup>18</sup> *Homil.* 2, no. 2: PL 183, 64, cited by Paul VI.

“though they do not enjoy full communion with the Catholic Church, do join with us in honoring and venerating Mary as the Mother of God’s Son.” He then takes a bold step further calling upon “all Christians” to see Mary “as the sign of unity and the spur to brotherhood among all Christians, in the one Church of Christ . . . ” (286: emphasis added).

Yet immediately after this, he reminds his readers that in October 1942, Pius XII had, in a radio broadcast to the people of Portugal, “consecrated the Church and the whole human race to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary.” Even more surprisingly, Paul now urges all members of the Church to reconsecrate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This, of course, is language which is utterly unintelligible, almost meaningless, if not distasteful, to Christians who do not belong in the Roman or Latin Catholic tradition. Yet the term “Immaculate Heart,” in itself, affirms nothing more than is formally stated in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is not used everywhere in the Roman Communion, but it is closely linked with Fatima, and those “enthusiastic” Marian movements which flourished under Pius XII. Similarly, to consecrate or dedicate oneself (or others) to the care of the Virgin Mary may sound the language of hyperbole. But it is in fact simply applying to oneself or to others the concepts expressed in the ancient prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*.

He concludes, “We are sure that our Mother and heavenly queen will not fail to stay close to her children and, from her home in heaven, to guard the whole Church of Christ and further the salvation of the whole human race” (286: emphasis added).

The language of this document is decidedly different from that of Pope John XXIII, and from the previous ones of Pope Paul VI. True, though the novel terminology of “consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary” may sound most strange in Orthodox ears, the concept it enshrines is certainly part of Orthodox piety, hymnography and even belief. It all fits into the pattern of that year of great hope, when Paul visited Constantinople, and Athenagoras became the first Patriarch of that See to visit Rome.

Their pronouncements have been clearly analyzed and their significance well presented by Edward Yarnold,<sup>19</sup> but these lie, strictly speaking, outside the scope of our study. However, the Common Declaration issued at the end admits that in the journey towards unity between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, there still are obstacles to be overcome before the “re-establishment of full communion,” but its main message is that

an essential contribution for the restoration of full communion between the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and the Orthodox Church on the other, is to be found in the framework of the renewal of the Church and of Christians, in faithfulness to the traditions of the Fathers and to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting that nowhere do they mention the word “Mary” or “*Theotokos*.”

**The Apostolic Exhortation, *Recurrens Mensis October*<sup>21</sup>  
(7 October 1969)**

In this document, released on the Feast of the Holy Rosary, 1969, and addressed “to the Bishops, Clergy and People of the Catholic Church,” it appears that Pope Paul VI is returning to a statement directed specifically to Catholics. However, in his introduction he invites the “entire Christian people to engage in saying the Rosary,” and at the beginning of Part II, asks all Christians to address prayers to Mary. For practical purposes, however, the letter might have been addressed to Catholics alone, since it does not address any ecumenical question.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Yarnold, 67-79.

<sup>20</sup> “A Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I” (28 October 1967). The translation cited is from *The Tablet*, 221 (1967): 1188-1189; Yarnold 77-78 gives a slightly different rendering.

<sup>21</sup> TPS 14 (1969-70): 247-51.

<sup>22</sup> It might also be argued that, for the first time in these documents, a Pope has specifically addressed the female segment of the faithful as well as the male. Paul VI says he wishes to direct his remarks to “all our sons and daughters.” He uses the word “daughters” three more times in this statement. It could well be that this was the text as it stood in an original draft in (say) Italian, and that the English reflects this. Unfortunately, the only official text is the Latin, where the word used is *fili* (which can of course denote “children” of both sexes). So one cannot make too much of the terminology.

As one reason for this October appeal he gives the urgent need for “peace among men and between peoples,” mentioning “murderous conflicts,” tension among Christians, and even “within the Church itself” where “misunderstandings arise between brothers who mutually accuse and condemn each other.” This last phrase could be a reference to the turmoil which had been released within the Catholic Church by the publication, on 28 July 1968, of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, but the references to “murderous conflicts” must be to the wars in Biafra and Vietnam, to terrorism in the Middle East, and to the outbreak of violence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Pope Paul probably had in mind all of them. Nevertheless, the real occasion for the letter is the 400th anniversary of another papal call for the Rosary, by Pius V, who first formally established confraternities to promote the recitation of the Rosary by a bull issued on 17 September 1569.

The first part of the letter states that since God alone, who has placed the yearning for peace in human hearts, can give peace of soul and confirm human efforts for peace, we need to pray to Christ for the gift of peace. And since Mary, the Mother of Christ, ““found favor with God”” (Lk 1:30), it is fitting to invoke her intercession in our prayer for peace, for she is the Mother of the ““Prince of Peace.”” (Is 9:5). Indeed, the Gospel itself portrays Mary as sensitive to the needs of men (Jn 2:5), and just as Jesus responded to Mary’s request at Cana, so too, He surely would respond to her prayer for peace on earth “if we only pray to her with a sincere heart” (249).

In the second section of this statement, Paul says that the obligation to pray for justice and peace applies to everyone, and therefore all Christians should ask Mary to pray with them and for them so that the Lord will grant peace. He recommends meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, learning from Mary’s example to become peaceful souls, “through loving and unceasing association with Jesus and with the mysteries of His redemptive life.” In saying everyone must pray, Paul lists specifically: children and young people, the ill and the elderly, adults who are busy in the work of



each day, members of religious orders, and bishops and priests: in other words, all people, according to their status in life. By doing this, he says, “we shall all devote ourselves, like the Apostles in the upper room, ‘to prayer together with . . . Mary the mother of Jesus.’” (Gal 5:22) (249).

In a third section, Paul VI begs for prayers “for all who perform the tasks of peace in the world,” for vocations to become workers for peace, for the rooting out of sectarianism and racism, hatred and wickedness in the hearts of all (250). In particular, prayers should be offered for unity of the children of God, prayers for a “climate of mutual respect and confidence of dialogue and reciprocal benevolence.” He asks that the differences among the members of the Church complement one another, and referring to St. Paul in the twelfth chapter of Romans, he asks that those with differences in the Church live peaceably together, without passing judgment on each other, but in peace and mutual upbuilding (250). (This may well be a reference to Northern Ireland, where sectarian opposition was beginning to spill over into violence.) Paul concludes RMO, by pledging that, as Pope, he will always labor and pray for peace, and by asking that all the bishops, the clergy and the faithful will also patiently forbear ““one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”” (Eph 2:14-16) (250).

Paul VI concludes with a quotation from LG §§66-67 given here in full because it contains elements which he will soon use in his major statement on the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Marialis Cultus*:

Let all faithful Christians offer urgent prayers to the Mother of God and Mother of men in order that she may intercede with her Son in the communion of all the Saints, until the whole family of nations--whether they bear the honored name of Christian or still do not know their Savior--may be joyfully assembled into a single People of God, in peace and harmony, to the glory of the most holy and undivided Trinity.

**“A Common Declaration  
of Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III”<sup>23</sup>  
(10 May 1973)**

This came after a long visit by a delegation of Copts to Rome, in which they lived as guests in the Vatican for ten days, and is of major ecumenical significance.<sup>24</sup>

The statement begins by asserting their agreement on the seven sacraments, and there follows immediately this affirmation concerning the Virgin Mary: “We venerate the Virgin Mary, Mother of the True Light, and we confess that she is ever Virgin, the God-bearer. She intercedes for us, and, as the Theotokos, excels in her dignity all angelic hosts” (300).

Pope Paul VI and Pope Shenouda III then assert that they have, “to a large degree, the same understanding of the Church,” and of the “important role of the ecumenical and local councils” (300). They also mention other areas of similar understanding and practice: spirituality expressed in rituals and Liturgy of the Mass, fasts and feasts, veneration of the relics of the saints, asking for the intercession of the angels and the saints, the living and departed.

As in the statement by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, there is also an acknowledgement that the existing divisions “have behind them centuries of difficult history.” Since A.D. 451, the date of the division between them, “theological differences, nourished and widened by non-theological factors, have sprung up” (300). In spite of this, however, “we are rediscovering ourselves as Churches with a common inheritance and are reaching out with determination and confidence in the Lord to achieve the fullness and perfection of that unity which is His gift” (300-301: emphasis added). It is to be noted that they speak of “theological differences,” which, in Roman parlance, are quite

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<sup>23</sup> AAS 65 (1973): 299-301.

<sup>24</sup> In order to understand the Coptic position one needs to be aware of some of the historical and political circumstances. But since these are not directly relevant to Paul VI’s Marian teaching, they are outlined in a Detached Note at the end of the thesis (Detached Note B, “The Copts”).

distinct from “doctrinal differences,” and of an altogether less significant order; for the Copts, on the other hand, “theological differences” would probably be almost as significant as differences in matters of dogma.

With a view to accomplishing this task of unity, they therefore undertake to create a joint commission for common study in Church tradition, patristics, liturgy, theology, history and practical problems “so that by cooperation in common we may seek to resolve, in a spirit of mutual respect (emphasis added), the differences existing between our Churches and be able to proclaim together the Gospel in ways which correspond to the authentic message of the Lord and to the needs and hopes of today’s world” (301). It is significant that the conclusion to this call for joint efforts toward unity closes with an expression of gratitude and encouragement to other groups of Catholic and Orthodox scholars and pastors who have already been working in this area.<sup>25</sup> Finally they publicly “reject all forms of proselytism,” and recommend that Catholics and Copts strive to “deepen charity and cultivate mutual consultation, reflection and cooperation in the social and intellectual fields” (301).

The Pope and Patriarch conclude with a call for peace and justice in the “land which was hallowed by the preaching, death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and by the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom we venerate together as the Theotokos” (301: emphasis added).<sup>26</sup>

The tone and the content of this joint declaration of Paul VI and Shenouda III is quite different from that between Paul VI and Athenagoras I, on 28 October 1967. Paul and Athenagoras speak as if they already agreed on almost everything, whereas Paul and Shenouda begin with a long statement about the divinity and humanity of Christ. It was

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<sup>25</sup> This is almost certainly included because of the contacts being made at that time both between Orthodox and Copts and between Roman Catholics and Orthodox, so that the Orthodox should not feel that the two other parties were engaged in coming to an agreement at the expense of Orthodoxy.

<sup>26</sup> Renewed fighting between Arabs and Israelis had led to an oil embargo on the part of the Arab oil-producing nations in retaliation for support of Israel by the U.S., Western Europe and Japan, thus precipitating an energy crisis in the industrialized world.

the wording of the Council of Chalcedon (451) which led to the separation between the Coptic Church of Alexandria and the other Churches, and it is fascinating to observe how this document succeeds in incorporating the entire doctrine of Chalcedon without using the disputed terminology of ‘two natures’.<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, the statement issued by Paul and Athenagoras, speaks of the “re-establishment of full communion,” whereas this statement by Paul and Shenouda says rather “we are rediscovering ourselves as Churches with a common inheritance . . . to achieve the fullness and perfection of that unity. . . .” Paul and Shenouda refer to each other as “Churches.” Paul and Athenagoras had used “sister churches.”

Mary is mentioned in the joint statement of Paul and Shenouda, but not in that of Paul and Athenagoras. The only reasonable explanation of this silence is that the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches know and acknowledge that they are in virtually complete agreement on such things as Mary, the authority of the Church Fathers, and scripture. This conclusion is supported by the change in language noted earlier in *Signum Magnum*, in which, for the first time, the Pope makes specific reference in one of his Marian documents to the Orthodox Churches.

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<sup>27</sup> Yarnold gives a short account of the visit on 112-15, but does not give the relevant part of the text, which reads: “assuming for Himself a real body with a rational soul, and who shared with us our humanity but without sin. We confess that our Lord and God and Saviour and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to His divinity, perfect man with respect to His humanity. In Him His divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation. In Him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.” The official text of the Declaration is English, and the passage above occurs in the AAS 65 (1973) on p. 300.

## Chapter 4

### *Marialis Cultus* (1974)

The story of the debate at the Second Vatican Council about the place of Mary in Catholic doctrine has often been told, and lies outside the scope of this thesis, which is concerned only with strictly papal documents; but for that very reason, because we are concerned with papal documents, a short introduction must deal with one very closely related point from that Council.

Given the impassioned debate between the bishops at the Second Vatican Council over the statement on Mary, it was only natural that profound differences should persist and be reflected in popular piety even after the Council. But a new factor had to be taken into account, namely, the Council's legislation calling for a comprehensive liturgical reform.

Before the Council, the popular manifestations of Marian piety were, especially to outsiders, a hallmark of Roman Catholicism. In some cases, para-liturgical Marian devotions in the vernacular were so prominent that one could say that sometimes they seemed to dominate even the celebration of the Latin Mass. Leo XIII's prescription for the public recitation of the Rosary during Mass in the month of October was the most extreme case,<sup>1</sup> but it was only one example. The fact is, that for many centuries, the Mass had become a service celebrated by the priest, or by the priest and choir, in which the prayers of the Offertory and of the Canon were always recited in silence, and the congregation participated in the service only by their physical presence and silent prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> See above chapter 2, p. 23.

In these circumstances it was not unusual, even outside the month of October, to see many of the congregation silently reciting the Rosary during Mass.

Once the Second Vatican Council had ordered that the prayers of the Offertory and of the Canon were always to be recited aloud, had authorized the introduction of modern languages into public worship, and had called for active participation by all attending the service, the entire situation was altered. The newly revised Latin edition of the *Missale Romanum* was published in 1970, and vernacular translations followed swiftly, within the year. Not surprisingly, the translation of the Mass into the vernacular, and the increasing participation of the laity by congregational responses in their own language, and the widespread introduction of Mass in the evening, led to a decline in many previously popular, non-liturgical, devotions such as the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross; there was, by definition, simply no space for them within the liturgy. On the other hand, the new Liturgy did not always seem to meet the needs of popular piety where devotion to Mary was concerned.

It is against this background that Pope Paul VI's next document, *Marialis Cultus*, must be considered.

**The Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*<sup>2</sup>  
“For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the  
Blessed Virgin Mary . . .”  
(2 February 1974)**

In his introduction, Pope Paul gently implies that Marian devotion has fallen on hard times and needs encouragement, though reminding the readers that since his election to the papacy, he has sought “to enhance devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary,” a devotion which “forms a very noble part of the whole sphere of sacred worship”(3).<sup>3</sup> He

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<sup>2</sup> Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, The Daughters of St. Paul, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> References to the introduction, which is five pages long, are to the paragraphs (§§) in it. Thereafter, it will be sufficient to cite the numbered paragraphs, so that references may be checked in any edition of the document.

is concerned, therefore, to integrate this new statement with the first document which came out of Vatican II, on liturgical renewal, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, to keep Marian devotion in the perspective of Trinitarian worship, and to place the love and memory of Mary in a very precise rank within the Communion of Saints (4), affirming that devotion to Mary “fits into the only worship that is rightly called ‘Christian,’ because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ, and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father”(4).

Pope Paul declares that Mary’s place in the Church is a result of the Church’s reflection on the mystery of Christ and the nature of the Church, and therefore such devotion must not be separated from Christ. Mary stands at the root of the Church and as a culmination of the Church. God “has placed within His family (the Church), as in every home, the figure of a woman, who in a hidden manner and in a spirit of service watches over the family”(5). He then affirms that changes in contemporary attitudes may call for changes in the forms of the veneration of Mary; and the fact that this long paragraph (5) about changing social “sensibilities and manners of expression” follows the sentence just quoted about God’s “placing within the Church the figure of a woman” clearly means that he intends to include in his considerations some assessment of the changing role of women in certain parts of the world (5). So we come to Part One of the document, which carries a most unambiguous title that sets the scene.

## **Part I: Devotion to Mary in the Liturgy**

### **Section 1:**

#### **The Blessed Virgin in the Revised Roman Liturgy**

The extremely complicated system of grading feasts in the 1570 Roman Missal was much simplified by John XXIII in a new edition of that book issued in 1962. The

completely revised version of the Roman Missal of Paul VI in 1970 simplified the classification still further, so that now there are only four:

1. Solemnities
2. Feasts
3. Obligatory Memorials of Saints
4. Optional Memorials of Saints

For our purpose, it is enough to say that they represent four ranks of commemorations, in descending order of importance, with nearly all solemnities restricted to feasts of the Lord.

Pope Paul begins to describe the place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Roman Liturgy by a long examination (§§2-9) of the relative importance of Marian feasts in the Revised General Calendar, pointing out that the four solemnities of Mary, 8 December (the Immaculate Conception), 1 January (Mary, the Mother of God), 25 March (the Annunciation), and 15 August (the Assumption), are linked very closely to the cycle of the liturgical year and to the feasts of Christ (§2). The Immaculate Conception is a solemnity to celebrate the very beginning of the life of Mary, chosen from all eternity by the grace of God to be preserved sinless in order that she might be a worthy mother of Jesus, the Son of God; the Annunciation commemorates her acceptance of, and commitment to, that vocation; 1 January (formerly entitled “The Circumcision of the Lord”) is chosen for the feast of Mary as Mother of God; and the doctrine of Mary’s Assumption is based on the fact of Mary’s sinlessness and her divine motherhood. In discussing the Feast of the Annunciation, he writes:

With regard to Christ, the East and the West, in the inexhaustible riches of their liturgies, celebrate this solemnity as the commemoration of the salvific ‘fiat’ of the Incarnate Word. They commemorate it as the beginning of the redemption and of the indissoluble wedded union of the divine nature with human nature in the Person of the Word (§6).

He underscores the references in these liturgies to Mary as the “new Eve,” that is, “Mother of the living,” as “Ark of the Covenant and true Temple of God”; and he emphasizes the “Blessed Virgin’s free consent and cooperation in the plan of



redemption.”. With reference to the Assumption, he calls attention to its eschatological aspect, observing that this “full glorification is the destiny of all those whom Christ has made His brothers”(6). All four solemnities are therefore concerned either with the Incarnation of the Word, or with showing forth the full effect of the redemption wrought by him.

Second in rank after the solemnities are three other feasts: the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (8 September), in which the Mass for the day calls Mary “the hope of the entire world and the dawn of salvation,” the Visitation (31 May), and the Presentation of the Lord (2 February). These three feasts are clearly Christological, though not connected so directly to the central acts of redemption, and two of them commemorate events explicitly recorded in the Bible.

There remain only three obligatory memorial feasts of the Blessed Virgin: Mary as Queen (22 August), Our Lady of Sorrows (15 September), and the Presentation of Mary in the Temple (21 November). These are obviously less central to the story of the redemption, and none of them is mentioned in the Bible, though for the third, one can point, obviously, to Leviticus 12.<sup>4</sup>

The optional memorials are the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes (11 February) and of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (16 July), both with a very wide and more than local appeal; and the Saturday following the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Friday in the second week after Pentecost) provides for an optional celebration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. (The reason for this last is that a feast under this title was instituted by Pius XII in 1942, and found a wide appeal in certain sections of the faithful; it has not been suppressed, but reduced to an optional memorial.) Thus the number of Marian commemorations has been reduced from eighteen in the 1962 Missal to ten, plus three

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<sup>4</sup> The verses in Jn 19: 25-27 relating that “there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother” make no mention of her sorrowing, and indeed if these verses are interpreted as depicting the mother of Jesus as the New Eve, this would make her rather more a sharer in Jesus’s victory than a *mater dolorosa*, according to Johannine theology. I owe this reference to my supervisor, Dr. McHugh.

optional ones; and two of them, 25 March and 2 February, are now entitled respectively “The Annunciation of the Lord” and “The Presentation of the Lord” (where previously the title was “of the Blessed Virgin Mary”).

Paul VI then recalls that the new Roman Missal refers to Mary by name in all four Eucharistic Prayers, both in the ancient Roman Canon and in the newly composed Eucharistic Prayer III, as in the Eastern liturgies. He stresses, “in admirable harmony with the Eastern liturgies” (§10), meaning that in all four prayers of the Roman Rite, Mary is always designated as Virgin and as Mother of God. In the original Latin, the term is always *Dei Genetrix*, the exact liturgical and theological equivalent of Theotokos, rather than *Mater Dei*; it is unfortunately difficult to reproduce this distinction in English without an awkwardness of vocabulary which is not present either in the Greek or in the Latin.<sup>5</sup> The footnote which accompanies this remark cites three anaphoras used in the Eastern Churches, that of Mark the Evangelist, James the Brother of the Lord, and John Chrysostom. All of these liturgies contain references to Mary in their anaphoras, and the main difference is that in the three new Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite, Mary is called simply “the [most] blessed Virgin,” but not “ever-Virgin,” as in the Roman Canon and in the Eastern anaphoras. But no one would ascribe any doctrinal significance to this.

In the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, that most frequently used by the Orthodox Churches, “The Hymn to the Theotokos” immediately follows the epiclesis: the priest says, “Especially for our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary,” and the people respond with the hymn:

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I owe this observation to my tutor.

<sup>6</sup> *The Divine Liturgy according to St. John Chrysostom with appendices*, 2d ed., (South Canaan, Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 1977), 68.

In the liturgy of St. Mark, the reference to Mary occurs before the consecration of the gifts, immediately before the reading of the diptychs by the deacon in a Pontifical liturgy: “Hail, highly favored, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, for you bore the Savior of our souls. Especially our all-holy, spotless, blessed Lady, Mary, mother of God and ever-virgin.”<sup>7</sup>

There are two references to Mary in the anaphora of the liturgy of St. James. The first occurs immediately after the Sanctus, when the bishop seals the gifts and says, “. . . He came down from heaven and was made flesh from the Holy Spirit and Mary, the Holy ever-Virgin Mother of God.”<sup>8</sup> The second is found in a long series of petitions after the consecration of the gifts and before the Lord’s Prayer. It is, “Hail, highly favored; the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, for you bore the Savior of our souls (thrice). Especially our all-Holy, Blessed, and spotless Lady Mary Mother of God and ever-Virgin.”<sup>9</sup>

The Eastern prayers are, of course, as always prolix and more fulsome than the traditionally concise and austere prayers of the Roman rite. They are, however, worth citing to set in perspective the next paragraph in Pope Paul’s text, in which he affirms that the main Marian themes in the revised Missal are part of the doctrinal inheritance of the past: such are “Mary’s Immaculate Conception and fullness of grace, the divine motherhood, the unblemished and fruitful virginity, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Mary’s cooperation in the work of her Son, her exemplary sanctity, merciful intercession, Assumption into heaven, maternal Queenship” and others (§11). There are, however, other themes which have been more clearly drawn out in response to theological developments of the present day (Mary and the Church, and specifically, Mary, Mother of the Church).

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<sup>7</sup> R.C.D. Jasper and G.J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and reformed: Texts translated and edited with commentary*, 3d ed., (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1987), 62.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

In commenting on this title “Mother of the Church,” he takes great care to link two Catholic dogmas:

We have the theme of Mary and the Church, which has been inserted into the texts of the Missal in a variety of aspects, a variety that matches the many and varied relations that exist between the Mother of Christ and the Church. For example, in the celebration of the Immaculate Conception such texts recognize the beginning of the Church, the spotless Bride of Christ. In the Assumption they recognize the beginning that has already been made and the image of what, for the whole Church, must still come to pass. In the mystery of Mary’s motherhood they confess that she is the Mother of the Head and of the members--the holy Mother of God and therefore the provident Mother of the Church (§11).

In other words, he is stressing that the term “Mother” is applied to Mary in different senses when we speak of her as Mother of Christ (or Mother of God), and as Mother of the Church: in the latter case we are concerned only with a spiritual or metaphorical, not with a physical relationship.

The Lectionary has expanded the number of Old and New Testament readings concerning Mary. These are recognized, or interpreted, as Marian, either because of their evident content, or because they have been applied to her on the basis of “careful exegesis, supported by teachings of the magisterium, or by solid tradition” (§12). (One example of the latter might be the woman in Rv 12.) Likewise, the revised book of the Office, the Liturgy of the Hours, contains hymns and antiphons, prayers of intercession and other writings on Mary from the early Church, the Middle Ages and modern authors (§13). She is commemorated in other prayers of the Church, at baptism, childbirth, for those entering the religious life, at death, and for those in mourning (§14).

So the first section of Part One of the Encyclical can end with Paul VI’s observation that proper Marian devotion is not unliturgical, but, as can be amply demonstrated from a study of Christian worship in the East and in the West, either springs from the liturgy or is incorporated into it. He concludes by reaffirming that the liturgical revision which followed Vatican II has been executed within the living Tradition of the Church, and therefore “has recognized the singular place that belongs to

her in Christian worship as the holy Mother of God and the worthy Associate of the Redeemer” (§15).

## Section 2:

### **The Blessed Virgin as the Model of the Church in Divine Worship**

In Section 2 of Part I, Pope Paul draws specific conclusions about Mary’s role as a model for the Church in divine worship. As “the attentive Virgin” who receives God’s word with faith, she is the model of faith; so too the Church listens with faith, accepts, proclaims and venerates the word of God. He also notes that the Church must receive God’s word and in the light of it examine “the signs of the times” and interpret and live “the events of history” (§17).

Mary is the Virgin in prayer, in the Magnificat, at Cana and in the Upper Room. So, too, the Church daily presents the needs of the children to the Father (§18). Mary is the Virgin-Mother, who believed, obeyed, was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, brought forth the Son of the Father. So the Church must believe, obey, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and bring forth the Son into the world. Quoting two texts, one from St. Leo and one from the Mozarabic Liturgy, as examples of the teaching commonly found in the ancient Fathers, Paul reminds us that Mary as mother of Jesus can truly be envisaged as the type of the Church, mother of the faithful, who “by preaching and baptism brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of God” (§19). These last words show that this parallel is not mere fanciful thinking, but proceeds from the biblical teaching that every Christian owes his spiritual life in baptism to the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5), and is “born of God” (Jn 1:13).

“Mary is, finally, *the Virgin presenting offerings*.”<sup>10</sup> The opening line of §20 introduces a lengthy discussion of Mary’s role as the one who presented Jesus to the Lord in the Temple, and who joined spiritually in his self-offering on Calvary. The Church has always seen a genuine continuity between the self-offering of the Eternal Word at the Incarnation (cf. Heb 10:5-7), the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and the consummation of this self-offering on Calvary. Therefore Mary’s dedication of her son in the Temple offering, and her presence by the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25), unite her with that sacrifice of the Cross, and make her a model for all Christians who are, equally, summoned to unite themselves with their Lord’s self-dedication, even unto death on a cross (§20). “This the Church does in union with the saints in heaven and in particular with the Blessed Virgin,” he writes, and to justify this statements quotes at length from an Eastern anaphora, from the Syriac liturgy of James the brother of the Lord.<sup>11</sup> Thus she is the perfect exemplar or prototype of the Church which in its liturgy is presenting offerings to God. But she is not merely a model for the Church as a community offering public worship in its liturgy. She is the model of the spiritual life for individual Christians. Her ‘yes’ to God is an example of the way every individual should respond to Him (§21).

Paul VI concludes this section with a summary of the Church’s attitudes of devotion to Mary and the relationships which bind it to Mary. These include a profound veneration for the dignity of the Virgin Mother of the Incarnate Word, which must be expressed in love, because of Mary’s spiritual motherhood with respect to all members of the Mystical Body; in invocation, because of the Church’s experience in the past of Mary’s intercession as advocate and helper; in service to others, because Mary is the

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<sup>10</sup> Compare the remarks about Paul VI’s words in *La cerimonia dell’offerta* in 1965, chapter 2 above, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Note 62 reads “deign to remember all who have been pleasing to you throughout the ages the holy Fathers, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles . . . and the holy and glorious Mother of God and all the saints . . . may they remember our misery and poverty, and together with us may they offer you this great and unbloody sacrifice.”

humble handmaid of the Lord; in imitation of her holiness and virtue, for Mary is what the Church desires, and hopes to be. In short, “she recognizes in the associate of the Redeemer, who already shares fully in the fruits of the Paschal Mystery, the prophetic fulfillment of her own future, until the day on which, when she has been purified of every spot and wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27), she will become like a bride arrayed for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ (cf. Rv 21:2)” (§21).

## **Part II: The Renewal of Devotion To Mary**

Paul VI, having discussed Marian devotion in the liturgy in Part I of MC, moves in Part II to a consideration of specific guidelines for renewal of popular, non-liturgical Marian devotion. “The forms in which this devotion is expressed, being subject to the ravages of time, show the need for a renewal that will permit them to substitute elements that are transient, to emphasize the elements that are ever new and to incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from theological reflection and the proposals of the Church’s magisterium” (§24). Such renewal must be careful both to remain true to traditional doctrine, and to respond to the needs of the Church today. The problem is, how to achieve this. In the following sections Paul VI sets down some principles for action

### **Section 1:**

#### **Trinitarian, Christological and Ecclesial Aspects of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin**

The statement about guidelines for renewal of Marian devotion begins thus:

In the first place it is supremely fitting that exercises of piety directed towards the Virgin Mary should clearly express the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them. Christian worship in fact is of itself worship offered to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, or, as the liturgy puts it, to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. From this point of view worship is rightly extended, though in a substantially different way, first and foremost and in a special manner, to the Mother of the Lord and then to the saints, in whom the Church

proclaims the Paschal Mystery, for they have suffered with Christ and have been glorified with Him (§25).

A few comments on this text will be in order. Pope Paul is trying to reconcile old and new, traditional and modern attitudes towards the Blessed Virgin. Well aware that he is dealing with the problems of exaggerated and of minimalized Marian devotion, he is striving to lead the Roman Communion forward, without division, on a straight path. Thus he writes “it is supremely fitting. . . .” Some people, perhaps, would have wished to read here a stronger phrase, such as “it is utterly essential . . .”; but for Paul, that would have been too strong, for it would have been equivalent to saying that all the old hymns and practices which did not fulfil this requirement should henceforth be forbidden, or at least consigned to oblivion. This would clearly have been a pastoral disaster, for it would have been deeply wounding, and most offensive, to many ‘old-fashioned’ Catholics. What he does say is that “it is supremely fitting that exercises of piety directed towards the Virgin Mary should clearly express the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them”(emphasis added). “Clearly express,” “intrinsic” and “essential,” are strong words, to emphasize that Marian piety should be set in a Trinitarian and Christological framework. Next, he affirms that “Christian worship in fact is of itself worship offered to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, or, as the liturgy puts it, to the Father through Christ in the Spirit.” Only then does he add: “From this point of view worship is rightly extended, though in a substantially different way, first and foremost and in a special manner, to the Mother of the Lord and then to the saints. . . .” Each of these qualifications serves to set out the correct manner in which practices of Marian piety should be conducted, outside the Liturgy.

In §26 he makes a strong statement about the special relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit, and the importance of this for the holiness of Mary and her role in the Church:



Theological reflection and the liturgy have in fact noted how the sanctifying intervention of the Spirit in the Virgin of Nazareth was a culminating moment of the Spirit's action in the history of salvation. Thus, for example some Fathers and writers of the Church attributed to the work of the Spirit the original holiness of Mary, who was as it were "fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new substance and new creature" (26).<sup>12</sup>

It is, therefore, only logical that, in §27, he should ask for deeper reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in order to throw light on the position of Mary and her role in the Church today. He recommends that study be undertaken from both a pastoral and a theological angle, "to meditate more deeply on the working of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation. Such a study will bring out in particular the hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth, and show the influence they exert on the Church" (§27).

From these words about the Holy Spirit, the final statement in this section (§28) passes on, in an equally logical manner, to concern itself with Mary's place in the Church, or the ecclesial aspects of Marian devotion. Having clearly stated that Marian devotion must be solidly Trinitarian, Christological, and Pneumatological, Pope Paul says that it must therefore lead to the Church, and turns to the final chapter of LG for support. That chapter, "On the Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church," shows an appreciation of "Mary's mission in the mystery of the Church and her pre-eminent place in the communion of saints. . . ." His references to LG are all about the fundamental concepts of the nature of the Church "as the Family of God, the People of God, the Kingdom of God and the Mystical Body of Christ."

Most interesting of all is the manner in which Pope Paul reaches his conclusion of this section: remember that he is setting out guiding principles for the renewal of popular, non-liturgical, veneration of the Virgin Mary. And here in §28 he comes to his

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<sup>12</sup> The note for this quotation refers to LG8, "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church," and all of the references are from the Eastern fathers, St. Germanus of Constantinople, Anastasius of Antioch, St. Andrew of Crete, and St. Sophronius.

conclusion from two avenues: first, from the architecture and use of images in the Byzantine rite, and then, from statements made by the Second Vatican Council in LG.

Paul's first approach bears quoting, for it shows the emphasis he wishes to place on Orthodox Marian devotion:

The liturgical buildings of Byzantine rite, both in the architectural structure itself and in the use of images, show clearly Mary's place in the Church. On the central door of the iconostasis there is a representation of the Annunciation and in the apse an image of the glorious Theotokos. In this way one perceives how through the assent of the humble handmaid of the Lord mankind begins its return to God and sees in the glory of the all-holy Virgin the goal towards which it is journeying. The symbolism by which the church building demonstrates Mary's place in the mystery of the Church is full of significance and gives grounds for hoping that the different forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin may everywhere be open to ecclesial perspectives (§28).

Pope Paul, by saying "Byzantine" includes those churches, whether Catholic or Orthodox, which use the Byzantine liturgies. The use of the Greek term "Theotokos" is equally significant, for it is the watchword and touchstone both of Orthodox and Eastern Catholics to express their faith that Jesus Christ is one undivided Person, truly God and truly man. In concluding this paragraph with the words "hoping that the different forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin may everywhere be open to ecclesial perspectives," Pope Paul is perhaps hinting that, since Mary's place in Christology is a point on which the Catholic and Orthodox Churches do agree, it may be a fruitful starting-point for discussions of ecclesiology.

For indeed, just as Christians speak of "our holy mother the Church," following Paul in Gal 4:26, so others speak of Mary as their mother. This parallel between Mary and the Church runs deep in Tradition, and therefore the more Christians ponder the concept of the Family of God, and the Mystical Body of Christ, the easier it will be to understand how they are united as sons and daughters of the Virgin Mary, "who with a mother's love has cooperated in their rebirth and spiritual formation" (LG§63). Paul continues, quoting first St. Cyprian, and then Isaac of Stella (d. 1169):

As sons and daughters of the Church, since “we are born from the Church’s womb, we are nurtured by the Church’s milk, we are given life by the Church’s spirit.”<sup>13</sup> Both the Church and Mary collaborate to give birth to the Mystical Body of Christ since “both of them are the Mother of Christ, but neither brings forth the whole [body] independently of the other”<sup>14</sup> (§28).

The action of the Church in the world, its maternal concern that all men should come to a knowledge of the truth and to salvation, the Church’s concern for the poor and weak, her commitment to peace and social harmony, is an extension of Mary’s concern at Nazareth, at the house of Elizabeth, at Cana and on Golgotha, all of these salvific episodes having, Pope Paul says, “vast ecclesial importance.” The long list of footnotes, ten in this paragraph alone, cite a wide range of patristic sources, both East and West, supporting this statement about Mary and the Church (§28).

Paul VI’s conclusion to this section deserves to be quoted verbatim. After stressing the necessity for a rethinking of devotion to the Blessed Virgin to show its intrinsic and ecclesiological content he writes:

Thus love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other, as St. Chromatius of Aquileia observed with keen discernment: “The Church was united . . . in the Upper Room with Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His brethren. The Church therefore cannot be referred to as such unless it includes Mary the Mother of our Lord, together with His brethren”<sup>15</sup>(§28).

## Section 2:

### **Four Guidelines for Devotion to the Blessed Virgin: Biblical, Liturgical, Ecumenical and Anthropological**

The first topic is dealt with briskly, but clearly and forcefully. The biblical orientation of Marian piety should go further than simply relying on biblical Marian texts. It should also result in the use of biblical wording and inspiration for other hymns in Marian services and in the inclusion of “great themes of the Christian message” (§30).

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<sup>13</sup> *De Catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, 5: CSEL 3:214.

<sup>14</sup> *Sermo LI In Assumptione B. Mariae*: PL 194:1863.

<sup>15</sup> St. Chromatius of Aquileia, *Sermo XXX, I: S. Ch.* 164, p.134, cited by Paul.

Marian devotions outside the liturgy should be in harmony with the sacred liturgy and should orient the faithful towards it. Where this is not the case, and where changes in local customs are needed, pastors must use sensitivity and perseverance, and the faithful must be willing to change (§31). Then, in an unusually specific conclusion to the section on Marian devotions, he refers to distortions in following directives from Vatican II, by speaking of places where popular practices of piety towards Mary are “either scorned, *a priori*” and completely omitted, or--at the other extreme--intruded into the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The wording is quite strong:

In the first place there are certain persons concerned with the care of souls who scorn, *a priori*, devotions of piety which, in their correct forms, have been recommended by the magisterium, who leave them aside and in this way create a vacuum which they do not fill. They forget that the Council has said that devotions of piety should harmonize with the liturgy, not be suppressed. Secondly there are those who, without wholesome liturgical and pastoral criteria, mix practices of piety and liturgical acts in hybrid celebrations. It sometimes happens that novenas or similar practices of piety are inserted into the very celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice (§31-2).

Both this suppression of Marian piety and the misplacing of it are deplored.

The seriousness with which Pope Paul VI approaches the ecumenical significance of Mary stands out in the way in which he introduces this section. He writes: “Because of its ecclesial character, devotion to the Blessed Virgin reflects the preoccupation of the Church herself. Among these especially in our day is her anxiety for the re-establishment of Christian unity” (§32).

And so the next paragraph begins, “In the first place, in venerating with particular love the glorious Theotokos and in acclaiming her as the ‘Hope of Christians,’ Catholics unite themselves with their brethren of the Orthodox Churches, in which devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds its expression in a beautiful lyricism and in solid doctrine” (§32-2).<sup>16</sup> The word “Theotokos” has been used before, and along with “the

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<sup>16</sup> The reference to “hope of Christians” may be found in Orthodox liturgical practice in the Slavic tradition in the Office of the Third Hour in weekdays during Lent. The hymn in its entirety: “The hope, and the defence, and the refuge of Christians, the unassailable wall, the peaceful haven for the exhausted, art Thou, O most pure Theotokos; but as one who savest the universe with thine unceasing prayer, remember us also, O most hymned Virgin” (Cf. *Horologion*, trans. N. Orloff [London: J. Davey and sons, 1897;

East,” “Eastern liturgies,” and the “Byzantine rite,” but this is the first time that he has said “the Orthodox Churches.” The opening statement, therefore is that all Catholics, of whatever rite (Latin, Byzantine, Armenian, Coptic, etc.) are in their veneration of Mary united with the Orthodox Churches.

His second reference in this same paragraph is to the Anglicans, noting the scriptural basis for classical Anglican theology about Mary and connecting it with contemporary Anglican emphasis on “the importance of Mary’s place in the Christian life.” Third and finally, he mentions the Churches of the Reform, “where love for the Sacred Scriptures flourishes.” It is understood that the Orthodox and Catholic veneration of Mary share a similar basis, while that of the Anglican and the Reformed is somewhat different (§32-2).

Still talking about the ecumenical significance of Mary, Paul strongly cautions Catholics that not everything is well done, and that in seeking Mary’s intercession with her Son for the union of all the baptized within a single People of God, “every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christian brethren about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church. Similarly, the Church desires that any manifestation of cult which is opposed to correct Catholic practice should be eliminated” (§32-3).

Having spoken first about the positive grounds for optimism in discussing Marian doctrine and practices with members of the Orthodox Churches, the Anglican Churches and the Churches of the Reformed tradition, Paul turns to the problematical issues. “We realize that there exist important differences between the thought of many of our brethren in other churches and ecclesial communities and the Catholic doctrine on ‘Mary’s role in the work of salvation’” (he cites *Unitatis Redintegratio* 20). The

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reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1969], 38); it is also contained in a hymn in Matins for the feast of The Meeting of our Lord on 2 February and is present in the Divine Liturgy for that feast as well: “O Virgin Theotokos, thou Hope of all Christians, protect, watch over, and guard all those who put their hope in thee” (cf. *The Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, [London: Faber and Faber, 1969], 425).

distinction between churches and ecclesial communities is a technical one, for the word ‘churches’ is meant to include the Orthodox, the Anglican, and the Reformed Churches, “ecclesial communities” is meant to cover those which, like the Society of Friends, the Salvation Army and others, do not have a sacramental system or ordained ministers.

In this regard, he makes a further parallel between the action of the Holy Spirit in the overshadowing of Mary to make her the Mother of God, and in overshadowing those who are at work in the ecumenical movement: it is the same Spirit who is at work in each case, and who may therefore be counted on to make the ecumenical fruitful, as he himself inspires it. Indeed, he expresses the confident hope that the remembrance of Mary as the one who was made fruitful by the Spirit may become “even if only slowly, not an obstacle but a path and a rallying-point for the reunion of all who believe in Christ” (33). (Note that in these last words he does not repeat the distinction between churches and ecclesial communities.)

In the fourth and final section of these guidelines for reforming popular Marian devotions, Paul VI draws attention to what is probably the most visible, and certainly the most disturbing aspect of contemporary regard for (or disregard of) Mary, namely her status and manner of life compared with that of women today. He acknowledges that changes in the relationships between men and women and increased education among women have altered the role of women in the home, politics, the social and cultural fields, and that in consequence “some people are becoming disenchanted with devotion to the Blessed Virgin and finding it difficult to take as an example Mary of Nazareth because the horizons of her life, so they say, seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today.” He encourages theologians, pastors and the laity to examine these changes and the difficulties arising from them “with due care” (§34).

In showing Mary as an example to be imitated, he says, “First, the Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated, not precisely in the type of life she led . . .” (emphasis added). On the contrary,

she is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Lk 1:38), because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and the spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ’s disciples. All of this has permanent and universal exemplary value (§35).

Secondly, he states that views of Mary as model which have been put forward by popular writings in the past are not necessarily appropriate for today, especially for women, given the expanded nature of women’s participation in the life of the church life and society:

It should be considered quite normal for succeeding generations of Christians in differing socio-cultural contexts to have expressed their sentiments about the Mother of Jesus in a way and manner which reflected their own age. In contemplating Mary and her mission these different generations of Christians, looking on her as the New Woman and perfect Christian, found in her as a virgin, wife and mother the outstanding type of womanhood and the pre-eminent exemplar of life lived in accordance with the Gospels and summing up the most characteristic situations in the life of a woman (§36).

He is actually posing the unstated question, “What does this mean for men and women of today?” He answers this, again, indirectly, by saying that the answer to Mary as model in light of contemporary society (he says “anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom,”) must be found in Scripture, which must be read “under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,” while keeping in mind science and the world today (§37). In other words, not in a fundamentalist manner, not with a sceptical or unbelieving mind, but as a member of the Church, whose mind is guided by faith and by the light of the Holy Spirit.

He ventures briefly what that reading of the Gospels shows, prefacing his remarks on Mary in the Bible with “to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time. . . .” And then, in the very next sentence, he says, “Thus, the modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-

making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gave her active and responsible consent” to the Incarnation of the Word, that event which St. Peter Chrysologus called “of world importance. . . .”

<sup>17</sup> (§37).

He continues, specifically speaking to women, “The modern woman will appreciate that Mary’s choice of the state of virginity . . . was a courageous choice,” not done to reject the values of marriage, but to consecrate herself totally to the love of God (§37).

The modern woman should therefore recognize in Mary

a woman of strength . . . [who] . . . will appear not as a Mother exclusively concerned with her own divine son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community’s faith in Christ (cf. Jn 2:1-12), and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary.<sup>18</sup>

He continues,

the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord . . . the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people’s hearts (§37).

At this point it is important to note the sentence with which Paul had ended §36: “The Church understands that certain outward religious expressions, while perfectly valid in themselves, may be less suitable to men and women of different ages and cultures.” It is interesting to recall that the Catholic theologian, Hans Küng, had made a similar remark in his seminal work, *The Council, Reform and Reunion*, which appeared in the spring of 1961, a year and a half before the opening of the Second Vatican Council, on 11 October 1962. Küng there wrote:

It would be still more dangerous if in our longing for renewal and reform we were to turn some particular type or form of piety into an absolute. *In dubiis*

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<sup>17</sup> The reference is to *Sermo CXLIII*: PL 52, 583.

<sup>18</sup> Paul quotes himself in *Signum Magnum*, citing the words which also appear in the Prayer over the gifts in the Roman Missal for 15 September.



*libertas*, freedom in inessentials, applies to religious practice as well as to theology. A degree of emotion which would represent the utmost permissible limit for a Christian in Scandinavia might well be too little for a Christian in Italy. On the other hand, what may be genuine piety in Portugal or the South of France (in the matter of pictures, statues, prayers, processions, etc.) cannot be simply transferred to Germany. The Church has from the beginning loved unity in diversity. Reunion will be possible only if we strive to avoid imposing any uniformity on the practical piety of either communion.<sup>19</sup>

Küng was, of course, talking about Roman Catholic and Protestant difficulties in ecumenical encounters, and referring specifically to differences in attitudes and practice of Marian piety, but the same principles apply in other areas, e.g. in Catholic/Orthodox contacts on other matters.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Paul VI reiterates Vatican II's censuring of excessive Marian piety not doctrinally founded and minimalism in Marian piety, which obscures its importance. He warns against sentimentality and stresses the necessity of again remaining true to "the sources of Revelation" and doctrine of the magisterium; "everything that is obviously legendary or false must be eliminated." In this statement, he does not exclude poetic imagery, which by nature is not necessarily factual, but whose underlying message is true.

To illustrate that last point, the example of the feast of Mary's Presentation in the Temple on 21 November is useful. The origin of the idea of Mary's Presentation is a story in the apocryphal Protevangelium of James (late 2d century), according to which Mary was permanently lodged in the Temple of Jerusalem by her parents when she was two years old.<sup>21</sup> The placing of this feast on November 21st, sixty days after September 8th, makes us also think of a presentation sixty days after birth, as decreed by Lv 12. In fact, the feast of November 21st originated as the anniversary of the dedication of the New Church of St. Mary on the Temple Mount in A.D. 543. In the early Church the

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<sup>19</sup> Hans Küng, *The Council, Reform and Reunion*, trans. Cecily Hastings (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961), 124.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of guidelines in ecumenical discussion of Marian piety, see Küng, *The Council*, 124-28.

<sup>21</sup> See the "Protevangelium of James" 6 and 7 in article by E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, English ed. by R. McL. Wilson, vol. I, (London, 1963), 377-8.

Feasts of Mary were celebrated as local feasts, usually associated with the dedication of a church.<sup>22</sup>

Paul VI concludes his statements on the renewal of devotion to Mary by stating “the ultimate purpose of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to glorify God and to lead Christians to commit themselves to a life which is in absolute conformity with His Will.” He cites the verse from Lk 11:7-28, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked,” for the Church joined the woman in the crowd in praise of Mary. He continues, however, with the reminder that Christ replied to that praise of His Mother, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Lk 11:28), the praise of Mary is to emphasize that we must all live our lives according to God’s commandments (§39).

### **Part III: Observations on Two Exercises of Piety: The Angelus and the Rosary**

#### **The Angelus**

The final section of MC consists of what is modestly entitled “Observations on the Angelus and the Rosary,” two exercises of popular Marian piety, which are widespread among Western Catholics. He speaks about them because in the past the See of Rome has concerned itself with the Angelus and the Rosary and has issued various instructions. The question is whether these instructions are to be regarded as still in force? It is essential to note at this point that MC is an Apostolic Exhortation, rather than an Encyclical Letter, and it is addressed “To All Bishops in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See.” That means that the text is exhortive in nature, and does not contain legislation.<sup>23</sup> This is emphasized by the choice of the title for this section,

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<sup>22</sup> Dr. Paul Meyendorff, “The Historical Development of the Feasts of the *Theotokos*,” unpublished paper presented to the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Washington, D.C., 13 October 1990.

<sup>23</sup> Morrisey, 3.

“Observations,” he is simply sharing some thoughts on the Angelus and the Rosary with the Catholic bishops throughout the world. He also says he is discussing the Angelus and the Rosary to encourage the renewal of Marian devotions along the guidelines presented, either for a revival of old practices, or creation of new ones.

The Angelus, a short prayer recited in the early morning, at noon and at sunset, is meant to enable busy, working people to make a dedication of their time to God, in the ways that contemplative nuns and monks do by their regular hours of prayer throughout the day. Just as their worship has a counterpart in the Orthodox monastic cycle of prayer, so also a greatly shortened version of this forms part of the daily prayer of the Orthodox laity, which contains several prayers to the Mother of God.<sup>24</sup>

### The Rosary

In the section on the Rosary, Paul comments on a particularly Roman Catholic Marian devotion. Although the prayer, with its 50 or 150 repetitions of the *Hail Mary* seems to be directed overwhelmingly to Mary, its ultimate end is developing in the faithful Mary’s attitude of assent toward the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation (§44). He underscores its Christological nature (§46). He discusses the “quiet rhythm and lingering pace” necessary for meditation on the Lord’s life (§47).

He stresses that the Rosary should not be recited during a liturgy, but that its use should augment an understanding of the liturgy (48). By providing the opportunity to join with Mary in contemplating Christ’s life, death and resurrection, the Rosary, especially, the Hail Mary, “has been adopted by popular piety and approved by papal authority, which also enriched it with numerous indulgences” (§49).

Encouraging the recitation of the Rosary within the family circle, he refers to LG which sees the Christian family as a domestic Church: “Thus there must logically

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<sup>24</sup> See *A Manual of Eastern Orthodox Prayers*, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for The Fellowship of SS. Alban and Sergius, 1945; repr., London: S.P.C.K., Holy Trinity Church, 1968).

follow a concrete effort to reinstate communal prayer in family life if there is to be a restoration of the theological concept of the family as the domestic Church” (§52).

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Theological and Pastoral Value of Devotion to Mary**

In concluding this statement on the renewal of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mother, Paul VI concentrates on its theological and pastoral value, saying that “the Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship” (§56-2). The honor showed her from the first instance, in Elizabeth’s greeting (Lk 1:42-45) to the present day points to the Church’s norm of prayer and faith, which indicates the need for a “blossoming forth” of prayer with regard to Mary. The honor paid to Mary is based on Scripture and dogma, and (again quoting LG) is based on the singular dignity of Mary, “Mother of the Son of God, and therefore beloved daughter of the Father and Temple of the Holy Spirit--Mary, who, because of this extraordinary grace, is far greater than any other creature on earth or heaven” (LG§53). Thus

her holiness was full at her Immaculate Conception, and yet was increasing as she obeyed the will of the Father and accepted the path of suffering, growing in faith, hope and charity. She is the pre-eminent member of the People of God, a shining example, a loving Mother, who continues to intercede for those on earth. Her glory ennoble the whole of mankind (§56-2).

That point made, he continues,

We would add further that devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds its ultimate justification in the unfathomable and free will of God who, being eternal and divine charity (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-8, 16), accomplishes all things according to a loving design. He loved her and did great things for her (cf. Lk 1:49). He loved her for His own sake, and He loved her for our sake, too; He gave her to Himself and He gave her also to us (§56-3).

This is a moving and impassioned plea, evidently phrased to speak irenically to those of the Reformed Tradition; and Paul VI continues to stress what he has repeatedly

said in MC, that “Christ is the only way to the Father. . . .” Yet he can still openly assert that

the Church, taught by the Holy Spirit and benefiting from centuries of experience, recognizes that devotion to the Blessed Virgin, subordinated to worship of the divine Saviour and in connection with it, also has a great pastoral effectiveness and constitutes a force for renewing Christian living.

In brief, “the Virgin’s maternal intercession, her exemplary holiness and the divine grace which is in her become for the human race a reason for divine hope” (§57-1).

He concludes, quoting the Second Vatican Council’s “Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,” *Gaudium et Spes* (§22 and *passim*): “The Catholic Church, endowed with centuries of experience, recognizes in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary a powerful aid for man as he strives for fulfillment. Mary, the New Woman, stands at the side of Christ the New Man, within whose mystery the mystery of man alone finds true light” (§57-4).

To the casual reader of Pope Paul VI’s documents on the Virgin Mary it might appear that he was simply carrying on with the traditional line of Roman Catholic Marian piety. Careful scrutiny, however, has shown something quite different. Paul shows the course he has in mind, when in 1965 he stresses the Christocentric nature of Marian devotion, and hints at his interest in the Eastern churches by mentioning the Eastern liturgies and calling Mary “*Theotokos*.” He also calls for her to be the focus for unity with all Christians. In 1965 and 1966 his encyclical letters on Mary follow the standard practice of earlier popes, urging Catholics to direct prayers, especially the Rosary, to Mary during May and October for the Church and for the world.

1967 marks the beginning of Paul VI’s change in direction in his Marian statements. In SM he now writes with the certainty that he is being heard by Protestant and Orthodox as well as the Catholics to whom his statements are addressed. Here, he speaks of the “*Theotokos*” as if to say to the Orthodox that this is the basis of both

Orthodox and Catholic Marian devotion and that she is the common heritage of both. He again cites the *Sub tuum*, first mentioned in LG. He appeals to scripture, stressing Mary's faith, but then also speaks of her as the "New Eve," and Mary as fulfilling the Old Covenant and beginning the new. And now, for the first time, he openly states that he intends to be heard by not only Roman Catholics, but by all who venerate Mary and he calls for "all Christians" to see Mary "as the sign of unity and the spur to brotherhood among all Christians, in the one Church of Christ. . . ." This is a big change.

And then, in 1974 in MC, in contrast to earlier having suggested the Rosary in the months of May and October, he commends, instead, the liturgical revisions of the Council, which have placed the Blessed Virgin firmly within the mystery of Christ and the liturgy (MC15), and firmly states that Marian devotions should not take place during the liturgy. He says, "The Rosary is an excellent prayer, but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard" (MC55), practically a revolutionary statement, considering the place of the Rosary only a few years before.

This strategy would ultimately be carried further by Pope John Paul II who would directly address the Orthodox Churches, calling on them to consider how close the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches might be in their deep love for and devotion to Mary. But first there was still much work to be done, beginning, as we shall see with the first encyclical of the next pope.

**PART II:**  
**THE LETTERS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II (1978-1988)**

## Chapter 5

### Three Letters on the Holy Trinity (1979-1986)

Pope John Paul II's outstanding encyclical on the Blessed Virgin Mary, entitled, *Redemptoris Mater*, 25 March 1987, is preceded by three major doctrinal encyclicals which set the scene for it.

***Redemptor Hominis*<sup>1</sup>**  
**“The Redeemer of the human race . . .”**  
**(4 March 1979)**

The first encyclical of John Paul II, dated the first Sunday of Lent, 1979, begins *Redemptor hominis* (RH), “The Redeemer of the human race. . . .” Every Pope uses his first encyclical to set out his personal reflections on the task facing him: and, as so often in papal documents, the *Incipit* sums up the theme in a couple of words. For John Paul II, the major task confronting the Church today is to preach the mystery of redemption.

Part I (§§1-6) speaks first of the approaching close of the second millennium of Christianity (§1), a theme which will recur in later encyclicals. The Pope reaffirms his commitment to the goals of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, especially to their ecumenical aims, but at the beginning of the second part (§7) there is a subtle change. After asserting that the paths on which the Council set the Church, and which Paul VI outlined in his first encyclicals, will long continue, he speaks of the world as having entered a new age, much

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<sup>1</sup> *Origins* 8, no. 40 (22 March 1979): 625-43.



changed from that which faced his predecessors in the 1950s and 1960s, and adds, “How, in what manner shall we continue?”

This second part (§§7-12) is given over to a fairly classical statement of the doctrine of redemption through the man Christ Jesus, the new Adam, and naturally enough it reaffirms Christian optimism. One cannot, however, fail to observe that this optimism is severely qualified by an awareness of the possibility of an apocalyptic doom: in other words, the emphasis falls on humanity’s need for redemption by God. Thus in §8 he applies specifically to “people of the twentieth century” the feelings of frustration voiced in Romans 8:19-22, when they contemplate the pollution of the environment by heavy industry, the possibility of nuclear warfare, and the lack of reverence for unborn life. Over against this, “the church’s fundamental function in every age and particularly in ours is to direct man’s gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity toward the mystery of God’ (§10). He does not shrink from drawing the conclusion: all Christians, in all their churches or communities, are called to the apostolic and missionary work of presenting this truth to the non-Christian world (§11), and, he adds, this is the point of the Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Freedom.

Already we can discern the influence of his Polish background: Auschwitz-Birkenau had been in his diocese at Krakow, and most of his life had been lived in the shadow of Stalinism. Hence it is no surprise to encounter in Part III (§§13-17) a very stern critique of the modern world. First he notes the dangers posed by a technological society, dangers to the environment and dangers to morality, for, he declares, of itself, technology tends to promote a consumer society. Then he adds that contemporary concerns for justice, peace, the Third World and human rights, responsibility and human dignity point in the opposite direction, and are evidence that the age is particularly “hungry for the spirit,” and the church must concentrate on this (§18). On both counts, humanity needs to be set free from slavery to selfishness and unrighteousness.

Part IV (§§18-22) gives the clues to his future actions, and it is easier now to see where it points than it was in 1979. He asserts the importance of theology, and then at once stresses that it must be conducted as a service to the magisterium of the bishops who are in communion with the successor of Peter; he declares the desirability of a legitimate pluralism, and at once affirms even more strongly that it must never detract from the fundamental unity in faith and morality (§19). RH20 is a moving text on the Eucharist as the center of the church, but with warnings about its misuse, and a call for more attention to be paid to the Sacrament of Penance, and indeed to individual confession. RH21 dwells on the need to be faithful to one's vocation, stressing particularly the need for spouses to be faithful in marriage, and for priests of the Latin Church to be faithful to their vow of celibacy. From the choice of topics, it is clear what direction his pontificate will take.

It is no surprise, when we remember Czestochowa, to find that the encyclical closes with a paragraph devoted almost entirely to Mary as mother of the Church (§22); but it is also important to note that this paragraph is logically linked with the main message of the encyclical. In other words, this paragraph too is concerned with humanity's need for redemption, and God's gratuitous bestowing of it.

“The aim of any service in the church . . . is to keep up this dynamic link between the mystery of the redemption and every man” (§22), and of this service of bringing redemption to the world, Mary is a quite unique example. Mary is mother of the church because she was chosen by the Eternal Father, and endowed with grace by the Holy Spirit to give human life to the Son of God, from whom the whole People of God has received the grace and dignity of its election [cf. LG§56]. Christ extended her motherhood to include all his disciples and indeed all Christians, when he was lifted up on the cross (Jn 19:26.). In the Upper Room she was inspired by the Holy Spirit to pray and wait with the apostles until the birth of the church on Pentecost (Acts 1:14, 2). Thus Mary was included in the history of salvation and in the church's mission from its first beginning at

the Incarnation, and is included for all future generations insofar as they, like the apostle John, are to take her, spiritually, into their homes (Jn 19:27).

This §22 might be taken as a conventional expression of Marian devotion to which one need not attach too much significance; or as reflecting a naive and fundamentalist understanding of Scripture, for he certainly seems to argue on the presupposition that the narratives in Jn 19, and Acts 1:14 are narratives of historical facts; but if one looks at it ‘intuitively’ (from a woman’s viewpoint?) it is evident that the entire argument holds firm even if Mary was physically absent from Calvary, or from the Upper Room. In other words, whether Mary was physically present or absent on these two occasions, it would be truer, more to the point, to say that she was spiritually present than that she was physically absent.<sup>2</sup>

Given that this ‘intuition’ into Mary’s mind is not an unfounded or illegitimate induction, the reader is prepared for an exceedingly strong statement which follows. We are living in a “difficult and responsible phase of the history of the church and of mankind” during which it is necessary to turn to Christ, “who is Lord of the church and Lord of man’s history on account of the mystery of the redemption; we believe that nobody else can bring us as Mary can into the divine and human dimension of this mystery.” His argument to justify this assertion is that “nobody has been introduced into it by God himself as Mary was. It is in this that the exceptional character of the grace of the divine motherhood consists.” For “we can say that the mystery of the redemption took shape” in Mary when she responded with her “Fiat.” With special influence of the Holy Spirit, Mary’s heart “has followed the work of her Son and has gone out to all those whom Christ has embraced and continues to embrace with inexhaustible love” (§22). Mary’s closeness to man and her maternal presence in the church give the church the experience of being close to man (emphasis added).

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<sup>2</sup> See part I, chapter 3, page 33.

It is not surprising to find that he ends by concluding that the problems facing the church today call for “a profound link with Christ” and for “great, intense and growing prayer by all the church.” Only such prayer can change these problems from a crisis to “the foundation for ever more mature achievements on the people of God’s march toward the Promised Land in this stage of history approaching the end of the second millennium.” To this end, he asks the church to pray with Mary, and he asks Mary to pray for the church.

*Dives in Misericordia*<sup>3</sup>  
**“He Who is Rich in Mercy”**  
**(30 November 1980)**

The following year, on the first Sunday of Advent, came a second encyclical, closely linked to the first, to which it makes frequent reference. But whereas the first encyclical spoke of the needs and dignity of man, especially as revealed by Christ in the Incarnation, the second (DM) speaks of the mercy of God, carrying the discussion one step further: “Today I wish to say that openness to Christ, who as Redeemer of the world fully “reveals man to himself,” can only be achieved through an ever more mature reference to the Father and his love” (§1).

John Paul II certainly believes the world to be in grave danger as it approaches the end of the second millennium. At “this hour of history” the modern world, confused by the “major anxieties of our time,” needs the mercy of God, even if modern men and women do not realize it, and “making the Father present as love and mercy is, in Christ’s own consciousness, the fundamental touchstone of his mission as the Messiah (§3).

He speaks at great length about the concept of mercy, beginning with the Old Testament covenant with God. “God is merciful and gracious . . .” (Ex 34:6) and that is the reason the chosen people find the strength to return to God and look for forgiveness.

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<sup>3</sup> *Origins* 10, no. 26 (11 Dec. 1980): 401-16.

The Old Testament understanding sometimes saw mercy as a sense of responsibility (he calls that more ‘masculine’) and at other times, as a mother’s love (he says ‘feminine’). The Old Testament gives thanks for God’s merciful response to the sin and faithlessness of the chosen people, and in that sense, contrasts God’s justice with his mercy, showing that the love which generates mercy is “‘greater’ than justice: greater in the sense that it is primary and fundamental” (§4).

In a lengthy section on the Prodigal Son, he discusses the New Testament understanding of mercy, and by so doing, links this encyclical closely with RH. He points out that though it is the external hunger and poverty which first prompt the prodigal son to feel sorry for himself, it is the inner realization of his loss of dignity that is the beginning of his return to his father’s house: when he speaks, he speaks of having lost much more than material things, saying that he has lost the right to be called his father’s son. But the father’s merciful response to his repentant son goes further than the strict justice he might have chosen. This is because of his love for his son and because the father realizes that the fundamental goodness of his son’s humanity has been preserved. John Paul concludes that God’s faithfulness and mercy are still there today, reaching out to fallen humanity, and it is this which “constitutes the fundamental content of the messianic message of Christ and the constitutive power of his mission” (§6).

In brief, the mercy of the Father is fully revealed in the death of Christ on the cross and his resurrection from the dead (§7): that is, “In his resurrection Christ has revealed the God of merciful love, precisely because he accepted the cross as the way to the resurrection” (§8).

The Pope then introduces, in §9, Mary’s words “‘His mercy is . . . from generation to generation.’” It is fairly obvious that he is going to show how Mary fits into this scheme of divine mercy, generation after generation, for from the moment of the incarnation these words take on a new perspective in salvation history, since they are applied, in the Magnificat, also to Mary herself.

“Mary . . . is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God’s mercy.” This was the theme at the end of RH, and this paragraph in DM now spells out more precisely what was involved in this. “No one has experienced, to the same degree as the mother of the crucified one, the mystery of the cross, the overwhelming encounter of divine transcendent justice with love.” Mary had experienced in herself as no other person ever had, the mercy of God, and “she made possible with the sacrifice of her heart her own sharing in revealing God’s mercy.” This is because by accepting God’s will with her ‘fiat’ before the Incarnation, she implicitly and consequentially accepted to share in the destiny of her child; and this was to lead to her sharing in Christ’s suffering, even to the foot of the cross. Hence the phrase: “she made possible with the sacrifice of her heart her own sharing in revealing God’s mercy.”

Because of this, John Paul can write: “She knows its price, she knows how great it is.” It is her experience of, and her sharing in, this mystery of God’s mercy that prompt the titles, “Mother of Mercy,” “Our Lady of Mercy,” or “Mother of Divine Mercy.” She is presented principally as the mother of the Crucified and Risen Lord, and therefore as destined in some manner to participate in the messianic destiny of her Son; and so we may truly say that she shares in the merciful love of Christ, especially in the suffering of the poor, those deprived of freedom, the blind, the oppressed and sinners, and in that sharing, “this love continues to be revealed in the history of the church and of humanity” (§9).

John Paul draws this encyclical to a close with remarks about the serious nature of the problems facing humanity. Those living now are aware of the approach of the third millennium, and its previously undreamt of prosperity and progress in science and technology and in social and cultural life. Yet the problems facing the world cause a profound uneasiness about the future. Among these are self-destruction of humanity by atomic means, abuse of power which can result in depriving man of the interior freedom to pursue truth and faith, imbalance of wealth, materialism. Coupled with these physical

problems is a decline of many fundamental values, among them, “respect for human life from the moment of conception, respect for marriage in its indissoluble unity and respect for the stability of the family.” Moral permissiveness, dishonesty in human relationships, loss of a sense of the common good and “dehumanization” contribute to the moral decay of society (§12).

In the first encyclical (RH), these matters were listed as problems showing the need for redemption. Here the response is that these difficulties can be surmounted only by God’s mercy, and therefore the church must ever profess the mercy of God and proclaim it by directing herself to the heart of Christ. The Church can do this by meditation on the word of God, participating in the eucharist and in the sacrament of penance, and in thus in discovering God’s mercy through conversion. “The contemporary church is profoundly conscious that only on the basis of the mercy of God will she be able to carry out the tasks that derive from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and, in the first place, the ecumenical task which aims at uniting all those who confess Christ”(§13:emphasis added).

In short, the more the world becomes secularized and loses its sense of God’s mercy, the more it is the duty of the Church to appeal to the God of mercy. The love of the Father “has maternal characteristics,” and like a mother, follows each of her children when they are lost, no matter how many there are (§15).

Let us have recourse to that fatherly love revealed to us by Christ in his messianic mission, a love which reached its culmination in his cross, in his death and resurrection. Let us have recourse to God through Christ, mindful of the words of Mary’s Magnificat, which proclaim mercy “from generation to generation.” Let us implore God’s mercy for the present generation. May the church which, following the example of Mary, also seeks to be the spiritual mother of mankind, express in this prayer her maternal solicitude and at the same time her confident love, that love from which is born the most burning need for prayer (§15:emphasis added).

Again, as in RH, Pope John Paul concludes this encyclical by asking that the church pray with Mary who intercedes for the world.

*Dominum et Vivificantem*<sup>4</sup>  
 “The Lord and lifegiver . . . ”  
**The Holy Spirit in the Church and the World**  
 (18 May 1986)

For obvious reasons, this encyclical is dated Pentecost Sunday (Whit Sunday). It is the third in what might be called a trilogy on the Trinity, and whereas the first spoke of the needs of humanity, and the second of God’s merciful response to those needs, this one speaks of the effect of God’s response: he is Lord and lifegiver. *Redemptoris Mater* will presuppose that its readers have already digested these three, extremely long, doctrinal encyclicals.

In the introduction, John Paul moves for the first time to the more specific path which he will follow in his forthcoming encyclicals, and which will culminate in *Redemptoris Mater*, on Mary, to be released two years later, in March of 1987. He begins to turn his direction toward the Eastern Churches, and by doing this, at least indirectly, to the Orthodox Churches, stating that though the church from the time of Pentecost “has proclaimed . . . her faith in the Holy Spirit as the giver of life” (§1). This faith, which the Church has never ceased to profess, needs nevertheless to be renewed constantly and thought through more deeply. In the last hundred years, Pope Leo XIII has devoted an entire encyclical to the subject (*Divinum illud munus*, 1887) and Pius XII (in *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 1943) described the Holy Spirit as the life-giving principle of the Church. In 1973 Paul VI emphasized the need for “a new study of and devotion to the Holy Spirit, precisely as the indispensable complement to the teaching of the council.”<sup>5</sup> Paul was there thinking, obviously, that the external changes introduced, mostly in the Latin Church, as a result of the Second Vatican Council, would have little lasting effect unless they were accompanied by an interior renewal.

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<sup>4</sup> *Origins* 16, no. 4 (12 June 1986): 78-102.

<sup>5</sup> General audience of 6 June 1973: *Insegnamenti di Paolo* VI, XI (1973), 477.



The following words are interesting, for he gently hints that the Western Church could profitably look to the Eastern Churches to learn more about the Holy Spirit as lifegiver. The text runs: “In this we are helped and stimulated also by the heritage we share with the Eastern Churches, which have jealously guarded the extraordinary riches of the teaching of the Fathers on the Holy Spirit.” So he introduces his theme.

He then goes on to write: “one of the most important ecclesial events of recent years has been the 16th centenary of the first Council of Constantinople, celebrated simultaneously in Constantinople and Rome on the solemnity of Pentecost on 1981.” He then specifically states his ecumenical intentions, “The Holy Spirit was then better seen, through a meditation on the mystery of the church, as the one who points out the ways leading to the union of Christians, indeed as the supreme source of this unity . . .” (§2: emphasis added). Indeed, he asserts that the Trinitarian text of 2 Cor 13:13 (in the RSV and some other English translations, 2 Cor 13:14) has been the inspiration of his three encyclicals. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of RH, for redemption is the great free gift of “grace”; the love of God the Father is the theme of DM, he is so rich in mercy; and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the theme of DV.

Two remarks may be made at this point. First, after this statement about the importance of the witness of the Eastern Churches, it is somewhat of a surprise to read in the very next paragraph the phrase “who proceeds from the Father and the Son” with no explanation or comment on the problems surrounding this phrase. Secondly, one is even more surprised to find how little use is made of the Eastern tradition in the main body of the ninety-page text: a glance through the footnotes is sufficient.

However, the nature of this encyclical is perhaps made clearer three paragraphs later when he concludes his introduction:

Naturally, the considerations that follow do not aim to explore exhaustively the extremely rich doctrine on the Holy Spirit nor to favor any particular solution of questions which are still open. Their main purpose is to develop in the church the awareness that “she is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part toward the full

realization of the will of God, who has established Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world” (LG§17)(§2: emphasis added).

The plain meaning of these words is that the encyclical is not to be considered a doctrinal encyclical, but a devotional meditation on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. He is not discussing whether the *Filioque* should be in the Creed or not; in saying that John the evangelist was present at the Last Supper (§3), he is passing no judgment on whether the evangelist was in truth one of the Twelve. Indeed, both the Pope and his advisers are well aware that no academic theologian would be happy with the way in which he identifies the Servant of the Lord as a suffering Messiah in the Old Testament (§16), or with the way in which he speaks of the presentation of Jesus as Messiah during his earthly life.<sup>6</sup>

This completes the analysis of the three major documents of Pope John Paul II, on the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit, insofar as they supply the background presupposed in his Marian writings. These preceded his *Redemptoris Mater* and in a certain sense, paved the way for it. But certain other letters from the present Pope are needed to set the scene for RM insofar as they deal with the Eastern Churches.

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<sup>6</sup> In the opinion of my tutor, Dr. McHugh, The words just cited are therefore to be considered a disclaimer, quite possibly introduced at the suggestion of the officials of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to ensure that the wording of the encyclical is not invoked in favor of one side or another on questions which are freely debated in the Roman Communion.

## Chapter 6

### The Eastern Horizon (1981-1985)

In addition to the three major documents of Pope John Paul II, on the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit, which preceded *Redemptoris Mater*, and set the doctrinal context for it, certain other letters from the present Pope supply a historical background for a commentary on RM insofar as they deal with the Eastern Churches.

The first of these is *A Concilio Constantinopolitano I*, commemorating the 1600th anniversary of the First Council of Constantinople and the 1550th anniversary of the Council of Ephesus.

#### *A Concilio Constantinopolitano I*<sup>1</sup> “From the first Council of Constantinople” (25 March 1981)

In this rather brief Epistle, Pope John Paul begins to indicate the direction he will pursue in future encyclicals. Only a few months after the completion of his encyclical on the Father, and five years before he was to produce the one on the Holy Spirit, he takes the occasion of the 1600th anniversary of the First Council of Constantinople (381), and the 1550th anniversary of the Council of Ephesus (431), to introduce thoughts which will form the basis for his encyclical on Mary in 1987. The first of these councils defined the divine nature of the Holy Spirit, and the second proclaimed the divine motherhood of the Virgin Mary.

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<sup>1</sup> *Origins* 10, no. 44 (16 April 1981): 697-700.

These two councils are, of course, among the seven which are accepted by both the Eastern and Western Churches, and “the first Council of Constantinople is still the expression of the one common faith of the church of the whole of Christianity”(§1).<sup>2</sup>

It was this Council of the undivided church which first set out an unambiguous statement of the true divinity of the Holy Spirit, and from which there came, according to tradition, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly the Pope quotes in Latin the words of the Creed which assert the divinity of the Holy Spirit, “*Credo in Spiritum Sanctum, dominum et vivificantem . . . qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur, qui locutus est per prophetas.*” Rather astonishingly, he omits not merely the *Filioque*, but also the statement *qui ex Patre procedit*. This is certainly a very bold, and a very original, way to avoid being enmeshed in the relevant controversy, but it serves his purpose at this point: he can truthfully say that this assertion of the divinity of the Holy Spirit by the first Council of Constantinople “is still the expression of the one common faith of the Church, and of the whole of Christianity”(§1).

That much established, he closes the introductory section by quoting the very same part of the Creed again. The translation given in *Origins* reads:

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets.” These are the words of the creed of the First Council of Constantinople in 381 that elucidated the mystery of the Holy Spirit and his origin from the Father, thus affirming the unity and equality in divinity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son (§2: emphasis added).

This is the same as the English version issued by the Vatican Press.

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<sup>2</sup> So also the English translation issued by the Vatican Press in 1981, on p.4. The Latin, however, reads, “*declaratio unice fidei communis Ecclesiae omnisque religionis Christianae*,” which I am assured should be rendered as “the one common faith of the church, and of the whole of Christianity.” This translation will be preferred in the next paragraph.

<sup>3</sup> I use this phrase to avoid entering into the debate on whether this creed was in fact used or approved at Constantinople in 381: cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 2d. ed., (New York and London, 1960), 296-331. The Pope seems to take for granted that it was.

Considering the difficulties this paragraph raised for me, I am deeply grateful to Dr. McHugh for informing me that the Latin (the only official and authoritative text) says something quite different. It reads (as a direct translation from the Greek;)

*“Credo ‘ . . . et in Spiritum Sanctum dominum et vivificantem, ex Patre procedentem, cum Patre et Filio adorandum et conglorificandum, qui locutus est per prophetas.’”*

This is conspicuously different from the traditional liturgical text, and it does not contain the *Filioque*. I must again thank Dr McHugh for the following translation:

“I believe also in the Holy Spirit as Lord and life-giver, proceeding from the Father, who is to be worshiped and glorified along with the Father and the Son, who has spoken through the prophets”: These are the words of the creed of the First Council of Constantinople in 381, that elucidated the mystery of the Holy Spirit and his origin from the Father, thus affirming the unity and equality in divinity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son” (§2).

It will be noted that this translation is as unexceptionable to an Orthodox as the other is misleading,<sup>4</sup> and suits perfectly the purpose of the encyclical, which is to recall a common faith, ever since 381, in the full divinity of the Holy Spirit.

This conclusion is also supported by the fact that, two paragraphs later, when he introduces the events which led to the Council of Ephesus, we read:

By the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. The Council of Ephesus thus had a *value that was above all Christological* for it defined the two natures in Jesus Christ, the divine and the human, in order to state exactly the authentic doctrine of the church already expressed by the Council of Nicaea in 325, but which had been imperiled by the spread of differing interpretations of the truth already clarified at that council, especially by the spread of certain formulas used in the Nestorian teaching (§3:emphasis added).

In asserting that the decree of the Council of Ephesus, declaring Mary to be the *Theotokos* is primarily Christological, he is making a statement, frequently used by Orthodox when talking to non-Orthodox about the Mother of God. It is, of course, also

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<sup>4</sup> It is well known that a first draft of an encyclical is always passed to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for comment and revision. It would appear that the English version was made from an unrevised draft, and was not subsequently corrected.

the traditional teaching of all Roman theology, though it may sometimes unhappily be forgotten or overlooked in practice.

Hence, he can truly say in §4 that both anniversaries redound to the honor of the Holy Spirit, for all was accomplished by his power. On the one hand, the Church commemorates its Faith in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit. And in the light of this Trinitarian faith, it venerates Mary, the mother of Jesus, because of her response to the Holy Spirit: “the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as cooperating in the work of human salvation through free faith and obedience” (LG§56 and §4).

At the end of §4, there is a statement which may sound trite to some, and which may or may not be intended to catch the eye of the Orthodox, but it certainly does: “These great anniversaries too cannot remain for us merely a memory of the distant past. They must take on fresh life in the faith of the church.” Here, John Paul has managed to capture the very mind-set of Orthodox Christianity, that sense of the early church, of the councils, and of the Fathers of those councils, as living on in the Church today. It is often referred to, and sometimes even calls itself “the church of the Seven Councils,” and in the Orthodox liturgical cycle there are certain feasts which commemorate specific councils. When the Pope says that the Catholic church must, in a certain sense, imitate the Orthodox, it is significant. Indeed, in §5, he expressly prays that the commemoration of these two councils of the undivided church “will make us grow in mutual understanding with our beloved brothers in the East and in the West.” This is a theme he will develop in RM.

In Part III of the letter, he links the commemoration of the two councils with the Second Vatican Council.

We must give them [the commemoration of the two councils] life with our own times and establish a deep link between them and the life and role of the church of our period, as that life and role have been given expression throughout the message of the council of our period, the Second Vatican Council (§6).

In other words, the Spirit which spoke to the Church at Constantinople and at Ephesus is still speaking to the Church today, and there can be no true renewal of the Church except by His grace:

The whole work of renewal of the church . . . can be carried out only in the Holy Spirit, . . . with the aid of his light and his power. This is important, so important, for the whole of the universal church and also for each particular church in its communion with all the other particular churches. This is important also for the ecumenical process within Christianity and for the church's path in the modern world (§7).

And if “the greatest work of the Holy Spirit . . . is that of the incarnation of the eternal word by the power of the Spirit from the Virgin Mary,” then “the anniversaries of the two great councils this year direct our thoughts and hearts in a special way to the Holy Spirit and to Mary, the mother of God.” The joy at Ephesus over the profession of faith in the Virgin Mary's divine motherhood (Theotokos) “also glorified the particular work of the Holy Spirit” (§8).

The mention both of the church universal and of particular churches in the last paragraph but one, and the emphasis on the Holy Spirit and on Mary the Theotokos, are of course, music in Orthodox ears. The Virgin Mary's divine motherhood accomplished by the Holy Spirit

is not only the source and foundation of all her exceptional holiness and her very special participation in the whole plan of salvation; it also establishes a permanent maternal link with the church as a result of the fact that she was chosen by the Holy Trinity as the mother of Christ, who is “the head of the body, the church (Col 1:18)” (§8).

Citing both Jn and LG, he says that Mary's link with the church was more specifically revealed at the cross where she shared the intensity of His suffering as His mother and where Christ gave her to the beloved disciple.

He cites the Second Vatican Council's statements on Mary's unbreakable relationship with Christ and the church:

“Since it had 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 ‘With one accord devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren,’

(Acts 1:14) and we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the annunciation” (LG§59). With these words the council text links the two moments in which Mary’s motherhood is most closely united with the work of the Holy Spirit: first, the moment of the incarnation and, second, that of the birth of the church in the Upper Room in Jerusalem (§8).

In other words, Mary was by her prayers in that Upper Room, as closely involved in the coming of the Holy Spirit at the birth of the church as she had once been involved at Nazareth in the coming of the Holy Spirit at the birth of her Son.

As he concludes this letter, John Paul introduces several terms or concepts which he will develop in later documents, especially RM. An invitation to celebrate in Rome, on the feast of Pentecost, the anniversaries of the First Council of Constantinople and the Council of Ephesus is extended to the episcopal conferences of the Catholic Church and the patriarchates and metropolitan provinces of the Eastern Catholic churches<sup>5</sup> (§9). He uses this phrase again a few paragraphs later.

One final section of this letter requires comment, for it introduces a specific theological concept about the Virgin Mary and the church which is the similar to that of the Orthodox understanding of her place in the church:

Just as the Council of Ephesus’ Christological and soteriological teaching made it possible to confirm the truth about the divine motherhood of Mary, the *Theotokos*, so too the Second Vatican Council enables us to recall that when the church was born by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, she began to look to Mary as the example for her own spiritual motherhood and therefore as her archetype. On that day the one whom Paul VI called mother of the church irradiated the power of her intercession over the church as mother and protected the apostolic zeal by which the church still lives, generating for God the believers of all times and all geographical areas (§10).

He quotes LG which says that Mary as the mother of God is “‘a type of the church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ’” (LG§63 and §10). This connection between Mary and the Church is central to Orthodox theology of Mary<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Thus the English translation. The Latin simply says “*Coetus Episcoporum Orientalium*,” without specifying patriarchates, provinces, or indeed the word ‘Catholic’: was he hoping for some official representation from an Orthodox Church? I owe this observation to my tutor.

<sup>6</sup> This relationship of Mary to the Church is mentioned by most Orthodox theologians who have written about the Virgin Mary. See Georges Florovsky, “The Ever-Virgin Mother of God,” in *Creation and Redemption: Collected Works*, Vol. III (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Co., 1976), 187; originally published in, *The Mother of God: a Symposium by members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius*, ed. E.L. Mascall (Westminster: Dacre Press, [1949]). See also Vladimir Lossky, “Panagia,” in *The Image*



*Slavorum Apostoli*<sup>7</sup>  
 “The Apostles of the Slavs . . .”  
 (2 June 1985)

This encyclical epistle, in commemoration of the Eleventh Centenary of the evangelizing work of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, is dated the feast of the Holy Trinity. Though there is nothing of specific interest regarding Marian theology in it, it is of first importance for illustrating the general Eastward focus and ecumenical agenda of Pope John Paul II’s thought. More than in any other encyclical, one feels as one reads that here he is writing with passion, and from the heart.

In the very first section he moves directly to the point, even to an unusually personal reference, by saying that he, as the first pope from a Slavic nation, feels “a particular obligation” to write this encyclical. Though it is not addressed explicitly to the Orthodox Churches, one feels that he is saying to the Orthodox who form the majority of Christians among the Slavic nations: “You are Slavs, and I am a Slav. Your history is my history, and we must use this to draw us together.”

John Paul II links this letter with his previous letter, *Egregiae Virtutis* (31 Dec 1980), in which he proclaimed Sts. Cyril and Methodius co-patrons of Europe. Paul VI, in 1964, had proclaimed St. Benedict patron of Europe;<sup>8</sup> by proclaiming Cyril and Methodius co-patrons, John Paul wishes to stress the unity of Europe, putting Eastern Europe on the same level as the West. He notes, as is customary in papal letters, that in that earlier letter he was following the path of previous Popes. Leo XIII (*Grande Munus*, in 1880) had been the first to extend the feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius to the whole Church. In the note giving the reference for *Grande Munus* he also refers to letters

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*and Likeness of God*, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 200, 205-206; originally published in *The Mother of God*, ed. Mascal. See also Leonid Ouspensky, in *The Meaning of Icons*, rev. ed., trans. G.E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), 77-80.

<sup>7</sup> *Origins* 15, no. 8 (18 July 1985): 113-25.

<sup>8</sup> By the Encyclical *Pacis Nuntius*, TPS 10 (1965): 120-26.

written by Pius XI, and John XXIII, again to stress the continuity of his work with that done in the past. By thus mentioning significant facts to which his own *Egregiae Virtutis* was linked, he gives clues to his intention in writing this new letter, *Slavorum Apostoli*. First there is Pope John VIII's approval in 880 of the liturgy in Old Slavonic as translated by Sts. Cyril and Methodius; secondly, that was the first centenary of *Grande Munus*; and thirdly, there is the start of the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, which began on the island of Patmos in 1980.

A biographical sketch of the two brothers enables him to make several important points. Cyril and Methodius were sent to Greater Moravia in Central Europe, a Slavic land "at the crossroads of the mutual influences between East and West"; they succeeded in producing a written form of the language used by the people whom they evangelized and translated the scriptures and liturgical books into that language. The neighboring Latin Churches, which had begun the work of evangelizing these regions, were not happy with these developments, began to make difficulties, and the brothers decided in the end to go to Rome. Though they came under strong criticism in a public debate in Venice, they were cordially received in Rome by Pope Hadrian II, who ordered that their followers be ordained priests. Cyril died in Rome in 869 (§5).

Methodius was then consecrated Archbishop and papal legate for the Slav nations, but when he tried to claim the title of the ancient but defunct see of Sirmium (the modern Sremska Mitrovica, about 50 miles northwest of Belgrade), his opponents, political and religious, secured his imprisonment for two years. Indeed, they spread around Rome doubts about his orthodoxy, so that in 880 he was called there to answer the charges. Pope John VIII, who had personally intervened to secure his release from prison, found the charges groundless, and reaffirmed, at least in substance, all the prerogatives granted to the liturgy in Slavonic by Hadrian II. A year or two later (881 or 882) he received similar recognition from the Byzantine Emperor and the Patriarch Photius, who was at that time in full communion with the See of Rome (§6).

Part III of the encyclical (§§8-11) is a passionate defense of the inculturation of Christianity among the Slavs. For Cyril and Methodius, it meant leaving behind “the refined culture of Byzantium” (§8) and seeking “to transpose correctly Biblical notions and Greek theological concepts into a very different context of thought and historical experience” (§11).

They took as their own the difficulties and problems inevitable for peoples who were defending their own identity against the military and cultural pressure of the new Romano-Germanic Empire, and who were attempting to resist forms of life which they felt to be foreign (§10).

One can hardly be more pro-Slav than that. Yet when John Paul goes on to speak of the personal involvement of Cyril and Methodius in the emergent tensions between East and West, which were destined to increase, he adds that all these trials, and “even, for Methodius, imprisonment accepted for the love of Christ, did not deflect either of them from their tenacious resolve to help and to serve the good of the Slav peoples and the unity of the universal church” (§10: emphasis added). Knowing the Slav peoples as he does, he is well aware of the sensitive points in their history; indeed, he may have in mind especially the conflicts between Catholics and Orthodox in the Ukraine, for he is quite clearly implying that all sides will need to give up some things that are very precious to them for the sake of church unity:

Perfect communion in love preserves the church from all forms of particularism, ethnic exclusivism or racial prejudice and from any nationalistic arrogance. This communion must elevate and sublimate every purely natural legitimate sentiment of the human heart (§11).

With this principle stated, the Pope goes on in Part IV (§§12-15) to affirm that “though Slav Christians, more than others, tend to think of the holy brothers as ‘Slavs at heart,’ the latter nevertheless remain men of Hellenic culture and Byzantine training.” Yet they never sought to impose on the Slavs “either the undeniable superiority of the Greek language or the Byzantine culture or the customs and way of life” in which they themselves had grown up. For their peaceful way of building up the church according to

their vision of the church as “one, holy and universal” (§12), he can speak of “Sts. Cyril and Methodius as the authentic precursors of ecumenism” (§14).

Though subjects of the Eastern Empire and believers subject to the patriarchate of Constantinople, they considered it their duty to give an account of their missionary work to the Roman pontiff. They likewise submitted to his judgment, in order to obtain his approval, the doctrine which they professed and taught, the liturgical books which they had written in the Slavonic language and the methods which they were using in evangelizing those peoples (§13).<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, he is even more specific:

Having undertaken their mission under orders from Constantinople, they then in a sense sought to have it confirmed by approaching the apostolic See of Rome, the visible center of the church’s unity (§13).

It was in fact a shrewd move on Cyril’s part, both with respect to bishops of the Latin Rite who were unhappy with his missionary projects, and to those Frankish kings who supported them. Whatever might be the case with papers from Constantinople, no one in the West would challenge a mission conducted with the authority of the Bishop of Rome.<sup>10</sup>

John Paul continues,

their apostolate also possesses the eloquence of an ecumenical appeal: It is an invitation to restore, in the peace of reconciliation, the unity that was gravely damaged after the time of Cyril and Methodius and, first and foremost, the unity between the East and West (§13: emphasis added).

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<sup>9</sup> The Pope has, naturally, chosen to emphasize the role played by the Papacy in the mission of Cyril and Methodius. It must be said, however, that this is a highly complicated matter, and scholars differ on their understanding of the brothers’ motives for going to Rome. The facts are not clear, but Francis Dvornik’s interpretation holds that they considered their work in Moravia complete, and were actually in Venice on their way back to Constantinople, when bad weather prevented their planned return sea voyage across the Adriatic. They decided, instead, for reasons that are not clear, to go to Rome, where they were enthusiastically welcomed by Pope Hadrian. Cyril’s untimely death and the political turmoil in Constantinople following Patriarch Photius’ deposition, influenced Methodius to return to work in Moravia. (See *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs: SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius* [New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970], 131-159.)

<sup>10</sup> Ware comments: “To free his mission from German interference, Cyril decided to place it under the immediate protection of the Pope. Cyril’s action in appealing to Rome shows that he did not take the quarrel between Photius and Nicholas too seriously; for him east and west were still united as one Church, and it was not a matter of primary importance whether he depended on Constantinople or Rome, so long as he could continue to use Slavonic in Church services (Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 83-84).

Methodius (as did Constantine-Cyril) “always . . . resorted . . . to dialogue with those who opposed his ideas or his pastoral initiatives and who cast doubt on their legitimacy” (§15).

Thus he would always remain a teacher for all those who, in whatever age, seek to eliminate discord by respecting the manifold fullness of the church, which in conforming to the will of its founder Jesus Christ, must be always one, holy, catholic and apostolic. This task was perfectly reflected in the creed of the 150 fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, which is the unalterable profession of faith of all Christians (§15).

In commending the catholic sense of the church which Cyril and Methodius demonstrated by their catechetical and pastoral method of teaching and preaching in a manner understandable to the Slavs, by using their language and being aware of their mentality and their way of life, he links their method of evangelization with the intentions of Pope John XXIII to reawaken and renew the Catholic Church when he convened the Second Vatican Council. This is the theme of Part V of *Slavorum Apostoli* (§§16-20) to which Part VI (§§21-22) adds a few details about “inculturation.” Part VII is entitled “The Significance and Influence of the Christian Millennium in the Slav World” (§§23-27). The Conclusion (VIII: §§28-32) is a long prayer.

Part VII in fact sets the stage for his future letters on the Christian Millennium in the Slav world. The Slav Pope, treading delicately, is never more effective than right here, for he now comes to the real purpose of this letter, to show that Cyril and Methodius’ evangelization of the Slav nations contains firm principles for overcoming the things which divide the churches today. He even says that in spite of the later developments in which the Latin Rite took the place of the Slav Rite, notably, Bohemia, it would not have been possible to Christianize the people without the use of their native language, and that was possible only because Cyril and Methodius had given them one (§23).

For the same reason, although Christianity came to Poland through the Bohemian church, and hence, from Rome, “The beginnings of Christianity in Poland are

in a way linked with the work of the brothers who set out from distant Salonika” (§24). Then he speaks of the Slavs in the Balkans, and of how the disciples of Cyril and Methodius established a flourishing church in Bulgaria, where monastic centers grew under St. Clement of Okhrid. Thence Christianity spread to Romania, “reached the ancient Rus’ of Kiev and then spread from Moscow eastward.” Even here, he is sensitive to the tension among the Orthodox Churches over the Baptism of Russia (§24) . Thus

After eleven centuries of Christianity among the Slavs, we clearly see that the heritage of the brothers from Salonika is and remains for the Slavs deeper and stronger than any division. Both Christian traditions--the Eastern deriving from Constantinople and the Western deriving from Rome--arose in the bosom of the one church, even though against the background of different cultures and of a different approach to the same problems (§25).

He now states his underlying purpose in this letter: “Sts. Cyril and Methodius have held out to us a message clearly of great relevance for our own age . . . characteristic of them was the love for the communion of the universal church both in the East and in the West, . . . love for the particular church that was coming into being in the Slav nations.” They gave us “the invitation to build communion together” (§26):

Cyril and Methodius are, as it were, the connecting links or spiritual bridge between the Eastern and Western traditions, which both come together in the one great tradition of the universal church. For us they are . . . the patrons of the ecumenical endeavor of the sister churches of East and West, for the rediscovery through prayer and dialogue of visible unity in perfect and total communion “the unity which,” as I said on the occasion of my visit to Bari, “is neither absorption nor fusion.” Unity is a meeting in truth and love, granted to us by the Spirit. Cyril and Methodius, in their personality and their work, are figures that awaken in all Christians a great “longing for union” and for unity between the two sister churches of East and West (§26: emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

In closing he links himself, “the first son of the Slav race . . . to occupy the episcopal see that once belonged to Peter in this city of Rome” to Methodius, “the first archbishop ordained in Rome for the Slav peoples” (§28).

One final remark about the importance of the relationship between Cyril and Methodius and Rome calls for comment:

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<sup>11</sup> References are to his Speech at the ecumenical meeting in the Basilica of St. Nicholas at Bari (26 Feb. 1984).

This church grew even stronger when through the explicit consent of the pope it received a native hierarchy, rooted in the apostolic succession and remaining in unity of faith and love both with the church of Rome and with that of Constantinople (§29).

Thus the English translation issued by the Vatican Press, though the emphasis is added.

Once again, I must thank Dr. McHugh for calling my attention to the fact that the Latin has a rather different meaning. It reads:

*Haec Ecclesia plus est corroborata, cum aperte, adnuente Pontifice Romano, indigena ibidem esset hierarchia constituta . . .*

which may be more accurately rendered as:

This church grew even stronger when, with the approval of the pope, a native hierarchy was openly established there .

It would appear that the comma after “*aperte*” was inserted after the translation had been made from a draft version; but it does have the effect of making “openly” qualify not the papal approval, but the establishment of a native hierarchy. The emphasis is notably shifted from the papal action to the local church.

Pope John Paul II concludes this letter with a long prayer, asking for, among other things, God’s blessing on the Slav nations, and on the church universal (§31). He mentions Mary twice in this concluding section, first, giving thanks to God for sending his Son who “became incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary” (a paraphrase of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed) (§30), and then asking for her intercession as “the mother of your Son and mother of the church” (§32). He asks also for the intercession of the apostles Peter and Paul, Sts. Benedict, Cyril and Methodius and Sts. Augustine and Boniface, who also received their missionary charge, to England and Germany respectively, from the Bishop of Rome.

It is against this background that we must now consider his Marian encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*.

## Chapter 7

### *Redemptoris Mater* (1987)

Pope John Paul II set the stage for RM by his three major encyclicals, RH, DM and DV, thus placing this statement about Mary in the context of doctrine about God.<sup>1</sup> The title reads “On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church,” and it begins “The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation.” The introductory paragraphs elucidate these words.

### *Redemptoris Mater*<sup>2</sup> “The Mother of the Redeemer” (25 May 1987)

#### Introduction (§§1-6)

The opening sentence consists simply of that first clause followed by Gal 4:4-6:

The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation, for “when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”

That text from Galatians opens the chapter on Mary in *Lumen Gentium*, and by citing it, John Paul implies that his message, like that of the Second Vatican Council, originates from Scripture, for these “are words which celebrate together the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the gift of the Spirit, the role of the woman from whom

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<sup>1</sup> As has been previously noted, all three encyclicals contain passages about Mary.

<sup>2</sup> *Origins* 16, no. 43 (9 April 1987): 747-66.



the Redeemer was born, and our own divine filiation, in the mystery of the “fullness of time.””

His second footnote, affirming that “fullness of time” means “not only the conclusion of a chronological process, but also and especially the coming to maturity or completion of a particularly important period,” may seem superfluous, but it should at least alert the reader to the occasion of this encyclical. For, as John Paul says, “the circumstance which now moves me to take up this subject once more is the prospect of the year 2,000, now drawing near, in which the Bimillennial Jubilee of the birth of Jesus Christ at the same time directs our gaze towards his Mother”(§3).

The modern world is much given to celebrating centenaries and millenaries, and Dr. McHugh has itemized their significance in RM.<sup>3</sup> Given that in New Testament times a young girl in Palestine was normally betrothed between the age of twelve and twelve and a half, then--without taking a fundamentalist view of traditional dates--it makes liturgical sense to commemorate the 2000th anniversary of Mary’s birth on 8 September 1987, about thirteen years before that of Jesus (cf. RM3). Secondly, “this year there occurs the twelfth centenary of the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787)” (RM33)--to be precise, from 24 September to 23 October 787. The main act of this, the last Council accepted as Ecumenical both by the Orthodox Churches and by the West, was to affirm the legitimacy of icons, the restoration of which in 843 is kept <sup>on the</sup> first Sunday of Lent as the “Sunday of Orthodoxy.” Thirdly, 1988 marks the millennium of the conversion of ancient Rus’ to Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The reader is thus prepared for something about relations with Orthodoxy, and about icons. Indeed, in an unprecedented gesture of ecumenical bridge-building, the Vatican sent copies of the encyclical to the

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<sup>3</sup> John. McHugh, “Why this Marian Year?” *Priests and People* (formerly *The Clergy Review*) 2 (May 1988): 121-24.

<sup>4</sup> McHugh analyzes and explains the significance of these dates, and others, and of correlated papal documents (e.g. on the sixth centenary of the conversion of Lithuania in 1387, which is not mentioned in RM).

principal leaders of separated churches before it was published,<sup>5</sup> including presumably the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Patriarch of Moscow.

The first question these recipients might have asked is, how much authority does Pope John Paul II attach to its statements? In §1 he writes “I wish to begin my reflection on the role of Mary.” In other words, he is simply offering some thoughts of his own, some private reflections, for consideration. He calls it a “reflection on the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and on her active and exemplary presence in the life of the church.” As an example of the former, §1 is a meditation on Mary’s place at the fullness of time, where the Eternal enters into time; and as an instance of her exemplary function; §2 recalls that the Church “follows along the path already trodden by the Virgin Mary . . . in her pilgrimage of faith.”

§3 is filled with poetry, dwelling on an idea of the Advent Liturgy, of Mary as the “Morning Star” heralding the rising of the “Sun of Justice,” and then speaking of her as the Daughter of Zion, with reference to Zeph 3:14 and Zech 2:10. As this Daughter of Zion she becomes “Mother of Christ,” and the Church’s subsequent recognition of the oneness of Christ necessarily entailed recognition of the legitimacy of the title Mother of God, or *Theotokos* (RM §4 quotes both terms),

the dogma of the divine motherhood of Mary was for the Council of Ephesus and is for the church like a seal upon the dogma of the incarnation, in which the Word truly assumes human nature into the unity of his person, without cancelling out that nature (§4).

So far, all traditional Christians would agree, and especially the Orthodox, for whom all veneration and invocation of Mary centers on her role as *Theotokos*.

§5 is less easy to follow. “Mary, as the mother of Christ, is in a particular way united with the Church, ‘which the Lord established as his own body’” (LG§52). This does not say that because Mary was the physical Mother of Jesus in the flesh, she is

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Ryan, “Ecumenical Responses to the Papal Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*,” *Ecumenism* no. 87 (September 1987): 26-30.

therefore the spiritual mother of his mystical body which is the Church, only that she “is in a particular way united with the Church.” Then, as if to balance his rather intuitive and poetic §3, so attractive to the Orthodox, a long passage in §5 speaks about “her personal journey of faith,” her “pilgrimage of faith,” as if to address members of the Reformed Churches, by presenting her as the exemplar of faith.

However, as he introduces this theme of Mary’s “pilgrimage of faith,” John Paul II in fact writes as if he were addressing only Catholic or Orthodox readers. He quotes a text of St. Ambrose found in LG which calls Mary “a model of the church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ,” where the concept of faith is very different from that of the classical Protestant Reformers. And to apply so confidently to the Virgin, even in passing, the phrase “the better part,” taken from Lk 10:41, the story of Martha and Mary, is not the type of exegesis commended by Protestantism; yet this text is used in the gospel reading for three of four the major feasts of Mary in the Orthodox Church (the reading for the feast of the Annunciation is from Lk 1:24-38)(§5).

At the conclusion of the introduction, we read:

The Council emphasizes that the Mother of God is already the eschatological fulfillment of the Church: “In the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle” (§6 cf. Eph 5:27).

However acceptable to Roman Catholics and to the Orthodox, this language is hardly calculated to win new friends in Geneva.<sup>6</sup>

### **Part I: Mary in the Mystery of Christ** (§§7-24)

In this first of three parts, John Paul approaches Mary with the Bible as his point of reference in linking her with Christ. Unlike his predecessors, he quotes texts of

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<sup>6</sup> For the Orthodox, see, for example, Alexander Schmemmann, the eschatological dimension of Mary, “The first revelation of these ‘last things’ . . . is Mary” (emphasis in original), in “Our Lady and the Holy Spirit,” *Marian Studies* 23 (1972): 76. “She is . . . the ‘dawn of the mysterious day’ of the Kingdom,” “Mary in Eastern Liturgy,” *Marian Studies* 19 (1968): 82.

Scripture at length (many say quite needlessly), and his style of meditation can be extremely convoluted. This exposition and comment will therefore endeavor to present his argument rather more concisely and as clearly as possible.

He begins with Mary in Scripture, but it is not grounded on the historico-critical method of exegesis. Indeed, many Catholics would consider it to be, in the technical sense, rather pietistic, in that it appears to represent what these texts have come to mean to John Paul II in the course of his meditations. Yet if one checks them carefully, they never actually contradict the historico-critical approach.

Secondly, it is profitable to read this first part with an eye on the Genevan tradition in particular, for the Pope presents Mary as uniquely predestined to singular grace, a concept which John Calvin would have had to admit was certainly possible to an Omnipotent Creator. John Paul's argument is that this act manifests supremely the freedom and glory of God. This, together with the general Catholic tradition, is the key which guides the Pope in his interpretation of Holy Scripture.

### **1. Full of Grace** (§§7-11)

God's eternal design for the salvation of humanity is eternally linked to Christ, and therefore to that woman who from eternity was divinely predestined to be the mother of the Savior (cf. LG§55), and foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Gen 3:15; Is 7:14: RM7). Predestination left Mary freedom of choice, and therefore one may say that her definitive entry into the mystery of Christ took place at Nazareth when she consented to her vocation, after the angel said to her "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk 1:28). Aware of the problem raised by this translation (*gratia plena*), John Paul puts in brackets the Greek word, *kecharitomene*, and refers in a footnote to the "wide and varied interpretation of this expression in Patristic tradition," listing seven Greek and six Latin Fathers (§8).

He continues, “if we wish to meditate together with Mary on these words. . . .” Having shown his awareness of the exegetical problem, he embarks on a ‘meditation’, weaving together the biblical designations of Mary, “full of grace,” and “blessed,” with the verse from Ephesians, asserting that if all Christians are chosen and blessed in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:3), then Mary is from eternity singularly blessed, having received God’s gift of grace for her divinely ordained vocation, and having been present in the mystery of Christ even ““before the creation of the world”” (§8). Hence when the angel addresses Mary as “full of grace,” he calls her thus as if it were her real name,” as if this, not Miryam, were her real name, and Elizabeth too declares her “blessed among women.” In justifying the veneration of Mary by an appeal to scripture, he sets it firmly in the context of an absolutely sovereign and totally free election by God (§8).

Mary’s election is “wholly unique and exceptional” among creatures and entails “the singularity and uniqueness of her place in the mystery of Christ”(§9). By her election for this role, she is said to have found favor with God even before the incarnation, but she is also ““full of grace”” because “it is precisely in her that the hypostatic union of the Son of God with human nature is accomplished and fulfilled.” Hence, “she is also the favorite daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all other creatures, both in heaven and on earth” (§9: LG§53).

From justifying on biblical grounds the unique role of Mary, John Paul moves to a consideration of her immaculate conception. The ““glory of grace”” (Eph 1:7) mentioned in RM7 “is manifested in the mother of God through the fact that she has been ‘redeemed in a more sublime manner,’”<sup>7</sup> and, by reason of the foreseen redeeming merits of her Son, “preserved from the inheritance of original sin.” For this latter statement, he

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*; and LG§53.



cites only Eastern fathers, St. Germanus of Constantinople and St. Andrew of Crete. In writing “from the inheritance of original sin,” as distinct from “original sin” (without qualification), John Paul may be rephrasing the Roman teaching about Mary’s immaculate conception to commend it more to the Orthodox, who are far from happy with the Augustinian language of original sin, which underlies both the doctrine of Trent and the theology of the Reformers (what Latin theologians call *peccatum originale originatum*).<sup>8</sup> So he continues: “from the first moment of her conception . . . she belonged to Christ,” and “consequently, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the order of grace, which is a participation in the divine nature, Mary receives life from him to whom she herself, in the order of earthly generation, gave life as a mother.” (§10). Such antitheses and paradoxes are frequent in the Byzantine Liturgy, notably in the Akathistos Hymn.

In §11 the Pope speaks of the incarnation as the fulfillment of God’s promise to man “after original sin, after that first sin whose effects oppress the whole earthly history of man (cf. Gen 3:15).” Orthodoxy does not object to the term “original sin” in this sense, and would be very happy with the affirmation here that “Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word, is placed at the very center of that enmity, that struggle which accompanies the history of humanity on earth and the history of salvation itself,” for her Son is in fact, historically, the offspring who achieved the victory prophesied in Gen 3:15, and visioned in Rv 12:1. In this history, Mary herself is “a sign of sure hope” (§11).

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<sup>8</sup> The Orthodox do not object to the term ‘original sin’ when used, as in the next paragraph, for the misdeed of humanity’s first parents and perhaps this may explain the Pope’s intrusion here of the term ‘inheritance’, without employing the offending term. For a brief outline of these issues, see the summary of a debate between Kallistos Ware and Edward Yarnold in “The Immaculate Conception: A Search for Convergence,” paper given at the Chichester Congress of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, (London: ESBVM, 1987).

## 2: Blessed Is She Who Believed (§§12-19)

From meditating on the first section of the *Hail Mary*, taken from the Annunciation scene, John Paul moves to the second part, Elizabeth's words at the Visitation: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." But, he stresses,

While every word of Elizabeth's greeting is filled with meaning, her final words would seem to have fundamental importance: "And Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord (Lk 1:45)."

This section emphasizes Mary's faith, and is evidently designed to speak to Protestants in particular, but it would also be immediately recognized by the Orthodox reader as part of the Gospel readings at Matins for all four of the major feasts of Mary.<sup>9</sup>

In §13 John Paul writes of the obedience of faith, affirming that "The 'decisive' moment of her act of faith was the Annunciation,"<sup>10</sup> and then adding that "she responded, with all her human and feminine 'I'." But, he stresses, citing LG§56, this response of faith included perfect cooperation with "the grace of God that precedes and assists," an Augustinian phrase possibly introduced to allay the fears of readers from the Reformed Tradition. This brings up two important things. First, the implication that, as the Orthodox theologian, Alexander Schmemmann has written, "Mary stands . . . for the femininity of creation itself, femininity meaning here: responding love."<sup>11</sup> And secondly, that Mary's faith and obedience affected not merely her own life, for God's subsequent action depended on her response.

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<sup>9</sup> See Mary Ann DeTrana, "Mary, model for the Church and so for all of us," *Mary and the Churches*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1987), 47-49.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 30 of RM, comparing Mary with Eve in a citation from Irenaeus, *Expositio doctrinae apostolicae*, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Schmemmann, "Mary in Eastern Liturgy," 80. and see also Schmemmann, "On Mariology in Orthodoxy," *Marian Library Studies* 2 (1970): 31.

As Abraham's faith constituted the beginning of the old covenant, so Mary's faith at the annunciation inaugurates the new covenant, for like Abraham, Mary was called to make a journey of faith into a new and unknown future (§14). In §15 we read "Could she guess, at the moment of the Annunciation, the vital significance of the angel's words?" and also the cautious statement that "although through faith she may have perceived in that instant that she was the mother of the 'Messiah-King,' nevertheless she replied 'Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord.'" "May have perceived": John Paul is being cautious about the historical event behind the Gospel story, and utterly silent about any perception of her Son's divinity, but has no reservations about the fact of Mary's faith. He continues to dwell on this when writing of Simeon's prophecy, "a second Annunciation" which "reveals to her that she will have to live her obedience of faith in suffering at the side of the suffering Savior," a theme illustrated also by Matthew's story of the flight into Egypt (Mt 2:13-21: §16).

Even in writing about "the long period of the hidden life," John Paul surmises that Mary may have endured "a particular heaviness of heart," "a night of faith" of the type described by St John of the Cross (§17), which, if difficult to prove (but cf. Lk 2:48-50, cited here), does at least dovetail with the Christian theology of advancement in faith by a pilgrimage into the unknown. Mary's faith reaches its full meaning at the foot of the cross, where she was "the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of. . ." Gabriel's promise in Lk 1:32-33 that her Son would reign over the house of Jacob for ever. "Through this faith Mary is perfectly united with Christ in his self-emptying" (§18).

This section ends with a summary, based on St. Irenaeus, contrasting Mary's faith and obedience with that of our first parents, and affirming that Mary's advancement in faith during her earthly life makes present to humanity the mystery of Christ. In other words, Mary is presented to us as the prototype and exemplar of faith in the mystery of Christ (§19).



### **3: Behold your Mother** (§§20-24)

When an unknown woman said “Blessed is the womb that bore you” (Lk 11:27), calling Mary blessed because of her physical maternity (cf. Lk 1:48), Jesus’ response (“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it,” Lk 11:28) hinted that her blessedness rested rather on the fact that she was the first disciple, the first (in Luke’s Gospel) to “hear the word of God and keep it” (cf. Lk 1:38,45; 2:19,51). In §20, John Paul dwells on the development of Mary’s faith, arguing that she had to become open to a new dimension of motherhood, in which she, as the first believer and follower of Jesus, had her own part to play during the messianic mission of her Son. The emphasis is now on Mary’s “other kind” of motherhood, not on her physical maternity, but on her personal, and therefore spiritual, relationship with Jesus.

In §21 he moves to the Gospel of John, which explores this “motherhood according to the spirit.” At Cana, John presents her as “the Mother of Jesus” who contributes to the “beginning of the signs” which reveal her Son’s messianic power. “In John’s text the description of the Cana event outlines what is actually manifested as 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.” In brief, Cana shows her acting as a mediatrix or intercessor with her Son, bringing human needs within the realm of Christ’s messianic mission and salvific power. At the same time, by her command “Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2:5), “she presents herself as spokeswoman of her Son’s will,” and “at Cana, thanks to the intervention of Mary and the obedience of the servants, Jesus begins ‘his hour.’” “Her faith evokes Christ’s first sign and helps to kindle the disciple’s faith” (§21).

Mary’s mediation now becomes the object of John Paul’s concern, for to apply this term to Mary is anathema to many Protestants. The Pope explains it as a motherly

role, reiterates that ““there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”” (1 Tim 2:5), and cites the Vatican Council to the effect that “this maternal role of Mary flows, according to God’s good pleasure, from the superabundance of the merits of Christ; it is founded on his mediation, absolutely depends on it, and draws all its efficacy from it” (§22, citing LG§60). His argument is that all this is foreshadowed in John’s account of Mary’s role at Cana: her mediation is maternal, and from her divine motherhood flows “a motherhood in the order of grace” (cf. LG§61).

As it was at the beginning of Christ’s ministry at Cana, so it was at the end, at the cross. By the words “Behold your son! Behold your mother” (Jn 19:25-27), Jesus was not merely showing solicitude for his mother, but establishing a new relationship between mother and Son, calling upon his mother to see her son in the “disciple whom he loved,” and calling upon the disciple to see in her, his mother. That much is in Scripture; but John Paul adds, “following tradition, the Council (cf. LG§53 and §54) does not hesitate to call Mary ‘the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind’” (§23), which is certainly going further than the text of John, which refers only to the disciple(s) whom Jesus loved.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Mary’s new motherhood, generated by faith, was the fruit of her “new” love which came to definitive maturity beside the Crucified.

Mary is, then, at the center of the fulfillment of the promise that the “seed of the woman . . . will crush the head of the serpent” (Gen 3:15), not merely because she is called “woman” both at Golgotha, and at Cana, but because of the unique place which she occupies in the whole economy of salvation. Thus Mary’s motherhood of the Church, according to tradition, is an extension of her motherhood of the Son of God. She is connected with the beginning of the Church in Acts 1:14 and with the coming of the Holy

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<sup>12</sup> As evidence of tradition, the Vatican Council cites St. Augustine, affirming that Mary is “clearly the mother of the members of Christ . . . since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the church the faithful.” (LG§53, citing *De sacra virginitate* VI, 6: see footnote 48).

Spirit at Pentecost because she is present with the women and brethren praying for the gift of that Spirit who had overshadowed her at the annunciation (LG§59).

The opening of the final paragraph of Part I summarizes the argument:

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.[whose] discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of “birth from the Holy Spirit” (§24).

## **Part II: The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church** (§§25-37)

### **1: The Church, the People of God Present in All Nations of the Earth** (§§25-28)

So far, John Paul has based his remarks about Mary mostly on scripture, as if he were writing with a view to explaining Catholic teaching in non-scholastic, biblical, language which might appeal to members of the Reformed Churches. In Part II his tone changes, as does the subject matter.

Continuing to quote LG extensively, he reiterates Catholic teaching about the pilgrim Church. The Church’s journey is analogous to Israel’s journey through the desert, in that it is both externally visible in history, in time and place, and yet it is also and essentially an interior journey, a pilgrimage through faith in the Holy Spirit, the ‘*parakletos*’, the Comforter (§25). The main external difference is that the Church “is destined to extend to all regions of the earth,” and the main internal difference is that under the New Covenant, the continuation of Jesus’ activity in the Church is, as John shows, accomplished (explicitly, my interpretation) through the power of the Paraclete, the Spirit of Jesus which is given to the church to teach and guide it forever (cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). In this journey, Mary is present as the one who is “blessed because she believed,” in the pilgrimage through space and time and in the history of souls.

Indeed, Mary's journey of faith was both longer than, and prior to, that of the apostles, for hers began at the annunciation, theirs at Pentecost. True, Mary did not directly receive the apostolic mission to "teach all nations" (cf. Mt 28:19), but from her presence with the Eleven in the Upper Room (Acts 1:13-14) we may infer that they, recognizing her as the mother of Jesus, must also have recognized "that as such she was from the moment of his conception and birth a unique witness to the mystery of Jesus, that mystery which before their eyes had been disclosed and confirmed in the Cross and Resurrection" (§26). Mary was therefore "an exceptional witness to the mystery of Christ"; the Church prayed with her and "contemplated her in the light of the Word made man" (§27, citing LG§65). For Mary's faith "marks the beginning of the new and eternal covenant of God with man in Jesus Christ," and "precedes" the apostolic witness of the church, so that it is a model for all future generations (cf. Lk 1:48-49).

Here, very subtly, the tone begins to change. From speaking of her as blessed because of her faith, he now starts to remind his readers to bless her because she gave birth to the Son of God. "For knowledge of the mystery of Christ leads us to bless his mother, in the form of special veneration for the Theotokos." It is only the second time in this encyclical<sup>13</sup> that John Paul uses the Greek term *Theotokos*, and the wording I have underlined is beyond doubt intended to draw attention of the Orthodox to this section (§27). "Different peoples and nations of the earth" accept Christ and turn with veneration to Mary and seek support for their faith in Mary's faith. Blessing her for her faith does not prevent us from blessing her also as Theotokos.

Up to this point, he has relied heavily on references to LG, but they have all been to chapter VIII, the section on Mary. Now his references start to come from the sections concerning the unity of the church. He begins, "we draw near to the end of the second Christian Millennium," and then three times he quotes LG2 §13. "All the faithful

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. p.98 above, and RM4.

though ‘scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit’”; in LG this is followed by the words “and so ‘he who dwells in Rome knows that the people of India are his members.’”<sup>14</sup> There follows a list of places known for their connection with Roman Catholic Marian devotion. After “Palestine, the spiritual homeland of all Christians,” come Rome, Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima, and of course Jasna Gora, the Marian shrine in his native Poland (§29).

This first section concludes with a reference to the very first paragraph in LG, affirming that Mary’s faith, beginning at the incarnation and persevering to the cross, reopened an interior space in humanity which the eternal Father can fill with

“every spiritual blessing.” It is the space “of the new and eternal covenant” (Eucharistic Prayer from the Roman Missal) and it continues to exist in the church, which in Christ is “a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind” (§28: LG§1).

Note that Mary’s faith is once again connected with the unity of the church and even of “all humanity,” and that, by specifically listing Roman Catholic Marian shrines, he has implicitly raised the question of the place of Roman Catholicism in debates about Church unity (§28).

## **2: The Church’s Journey and the Unity of All Christians** (§§29-34)

Introducing this second section with LG§15, John Paul notes that “the journey of the church, especially in our own time, is marked by the sign of ecumenism. . . . The unity of Christ’s disciples, therefore, is a great sign to kindle faith in the world, while their division constitutes a scandal” (Vatican II *Decree on Ecumenism*, 1:§29).

He now arrives at one of the major themes of this encyclical: the Catholic Church, aware of the urgent need for Christian unity, expressed at the Vatican Council its

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<sup>14</sup> The quotation in LG§13, from St. John Chrysostom, is followed by an assurance about the legitimacy of particular Churches which retain their own traditions. One thinks immediately of the Catholics of the Syro-Malabar Church.

conviction that Christians must deepen their “‘obedience of faith’ of which Mary is the first and brightest example.” Secondly, Vatican II noted with joy that “among the divided brethren there are those who give due honor to the mother of our Lord and Savior,” mentioning especially Eastern Christians (LG§68; referring also to Leo XIII in footnote 74:§29).

In ecumenical dialogues in the West, Christians recognize that “they must resolve considerable discrepancies of doctrine concerning the mystery and ministry of the Church, and sometimes also concerning the role of Mary in the work of salvation,” which the Pope regards as “two inseparable aspects of the same mystery of salvation” (§30). This paragraph contributes little that would advance the discussion.

“On the other hand, I wish to emphasize how profoundly the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and the ancient churches of the East feel united by love and praise of the *Theotokos*.” The opening words of §31 are as striking as the irruption of the chorus into the *Ode to Joy* in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony: one feels that all the conventions have now been changed. Strongly approving the Eastern churches’ veneration of Mary, he recalls that the basic dogmas of the Trinity and Incarnation were defined in councils held in the East. He then pays eloquent tribute to their Christian commitment, their apostolic activity, and their long history of fidelity despite frequent persecution. Mostly, of course, it dwells on the devotion of Eastern Christians to the Theotokos. “It is a history of fidelity to the Lord, an authentic ‘pilgrimage of faith’ in space and time,” in which they have always looked to the Mother of the Lord.” He again cites the *Sub tuum praesidium*: “‘they have taken refuge under her protection’” (LG66).

Then specifically (and very diplomatically) he pays tribute briefly first to the heirs of St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Coptic Churches (specifically, the Ethiopian Church), to St. Ephrem and the Syriac Church, to St. Gregory of Narek and the Armenians (§31).

Moving gradually, but steadily, toward a direct conversation with the Orthodox, he introduces that discussion by first mentioning the liturgical importance of Mary in the

Byzantine liturgy, where “in all the hours of the Divine Office, praise of the Mother is linked with praise of her Son, and with the praise which, through the Son, is offered up to the Father in the Holy Spirit” (§32). This is important, for Orthodox theology about the Virgin is contained, for the most part, in the vast body of liturgical hymns about her. As examples, he quotes in full the hymn to the *Theotokos*, “It is truly meet,” sung immediately following the epiclesis in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, and notes the title, “All holy mother of God,” (*Panagia*) (§32).

Then, taking his cue from the fact that 1987 was the twelfth centenary of the Second Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787), the last accepted by both Rome and Constantinople, and the Council in which both East and West affirmed the authenticity of the veneration of images in their churches and homes, he begins to write of icons.

Here, John Paul ventures into the area where much of Orthodox theology about the Virgin is contained. In Orthodox theology, where the only dogmatic statement about her is the title *Theotokos* (defined at the Council of Ephesus in 431), there are over 300 different types of icons of her, each expressing aspects of the Orthodox understanding of her role in the Christian life. John Paul names several of the main types, beginning with the Virgin enthroned, “As the throne of God carrying the Lord and giving him to humanity.” He says that because Mary is the first among believers, and is therefore blessed, she is the “mother of Emmanuel.”<sup>15</sup> He lists the icons of the *Hodegetria* (the one who points the way to Christ), of the *Deisis* (our intercessor), the *Pokrov* (the protectress), *Eleousa* (the merciful and tender), and *Glykophilousa* (the tenderly-embracing). He also writes of Our Lady of Vladimir and the Virgin of the Cenacle.

Vladimir Lossky writes, “The place of the Chosen Virgin is central in the history of salvation” because Divine Providence works only within the freedom of

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<sup>15</sup> This is a reference to an important type of icon, Our Lady of the Sign, which will be mentioned more specifically in *Redemptoris Mater*. Its significance for Mary as a type of the Church is discussed in chapter 8, pp. 134-35, when Pope John Paul includes it in *Euntes in Mundum*

creatures, and the Incarnation of the Son of God could not take place until she consented. He cites St. John of Damascus, “the name of the *Theotokos* contains the whole history of the Divine economy in the world.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the dogma stated at Ephesus is the basis for the veneration of the Virgin Mary. For the rest, the Eastern Churches manifest their veneration of the Mother of God in art and poetry, rather than in academic analysis, and that no doubt is why, in order to advance the dialogue, John Paul II has adopted the language of the Orthodox.

But what has he been saying by referring specifically to *these* icons? The Mother of God Enthroned, is perhaps the most majestic and solemn of these icons. It presents the Christ Child-Pantocrator seated upright on the throne of his mother’s lap and she, in turn, is seated on a throne. The Mother and child are devoid of emotion; she supports him with her right hand on his knee and her left hand on his shoulder. He holds a scroll in his left hand, the book of world history, which the Lamb alone can open (cf. Rv 5:1-5), and gives a blessing with his right.<sup>17</sup> The point the Pope is making is, no doubt, that in this icon of the Lord of history, his Mother too is enthroned.

Or, to take another example, the *Hodegetria*, “she who leads the way,”<sup>18</sup> has a series of ancient prototypes,<sup>19</sup> and is itself the prototype of two other icons mentioned, *Eleousa* and *Glykophilousa*. In the Byzantine rendering of the icon, the child is Christ-Emmanuel, a mature small person who is the “pre-eternal God,” full of wisdom. His

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<sup>16</sup> Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, rev. ed., trans. G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982), this reference is to Lossky, 76.

<sup>17</sup> The prototype of this icon may be found in the Catacombs of Priscilla and Saints Peter and Marcellinus in Rome (see Miriamna Fortounatto, “The Veneration of the Mother of God” in *Priests & People* [Formerly the *Clergy Review*] 2 [May 1988]: 144). This iconographic type is known in Russia as the Cyprus Mother of God, and it was also popular in the medieval West (see Ouspensky, “The Mother of God Enthroned,” in *The Meaning of Icons*, 89).

<sup>18</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, trans. Elizabeth Meyendorff, (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 72.

<sup>19</sup> This is one of several icons of the Mother of God attributed by tradition to the Evangelist Luke, that is, as reproducing an icon once painted by him (see Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 96, n.1). The story is, that it was sent by Luke to Theophilus in Antioch and in the 5th century was transferred to Constantinople. The name, *Hodegetria*, was introduced in Byzantium in the 9th century (see Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 80).



hands are in the same position as in the “Mother of God Enthroned,” his posture is erect, and he looks straight out in front of him. The Mother, who is standing, supports the child on her left arm, making a gesture of presentation with her right. Her relationship with Christ does not display intimacy toward him, she looks not at Christ, but at the spectator over his head. She is truly pointing to him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Other icons (e.g. Tickvin) show her as pensive and saddened, showing her merciful intercession of prayer for the world. The same could be said about the most widespread icon in Russia, the Kazan Mother of God, who is grave, contemplative, expressing a sad tenderness and now, her head is completely inclined toward the child.

Among these is the Vladimir Mother of God, the most well known and one of the most ancient versions of the Lovingkindness image. Russian annals record its transfer from Constantinople to Kiev in 1155, then to Suzdal the same year. In 1161 it was moved to Vladimir (hence the name) and in 1395, it was taken to Moscow. It is still regarded as the greatest holy treasure of the nation and resides in the Tretyakov Gallery. Chronicles attach significance to its influence throughout Russian history, for it is seen to embody the deep love and veneration for the Mother of God which has existed in Russia since the beginning of the Russian church.<sup>20</sup>

In short, John Paul is speaking here not just to Orthodoxy in general, but perhaps to the Russian Orthodox in particular, or--to be more accurate, as he is--to the lands of ancient Rus', i.e. the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Russia itself (see §33). It is in this context that he writes: “Such a wealth of praise, built up by the different forms of the church’s great tradition, could help us to hasten the day when the church can begin once more to breathe fully with her ‘two lungs,’ the East and West” (emphasis added: §34). If this came about (i.e. if all the Churches of the East which share this veneration of Mary were united with the Catholic West), “it would be an effective aid in furthering the

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<sup>20</sup> Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, 96.

progress of the dialogue already taking place between the Catholic Church and the churches and ecclesial communities of the West” (§34).

He could hardly have said more clearly that he thinks the ecumenical energies of the Catholic Church should be directed first toward full communion with the Orthodox, in the hope that consequently and later, there may be progress in the West.

### **3: The Magnificat of the Pilgrim Church** (§§35-37)

This third section of Part II, is quite simply, a meditation on the Magnificat, and need not detain us. It has two main points.

First, that Mary’s response to Elizabeth’s calling her blessed because of her motherhood and because of her faith speaks of God’s “eternal love which, as an irrevocable gift, enters into human history” in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (§36).

Secondly, this same God, “holy and almighty,” comes, in accordance with his promises under the Old Covenant, in answer to the prayers of “the poor of Yahweh.” “The truth about God who saves cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the *Magnificat*, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus” (§37).

This might seem true but too obvious to be inspiring, until one reaches the ending. “These are matters and questions intimately connected with the *Christian meaning of freedom and liberation*” (emphasis in the original). The final sentences are a quotation from the Instruction issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 22 March 1986, “On Christian freedom and liberation,” and the underlying message becomes clear. If we are thinking of full unity between Rome and Orthodoxy, then Christians in the Soviet Union too are still waiting freedom and liberation, which will not

come about either through Marxism or through unchecked capitalism. Mary's Magnificat does not sit well with either.

### **Part III: Maternal Mediation** (§§38-50)

As always in papal encyclicals, this title does not appear in the original Latin, the only official text, but it, and the titles of the sub-sections too, are taken from the English translation issued by the Vatican Press. Here John Paul is entering the most controverted and the most sensitive area.<sup>21</sup>

#### **1: Mary, the Handmaid of the Lord** (§§38-41)

§§38 and 39 are a statement and defense of the propriety of applying to Mary the title "Mediatrice," based largely on LG §§60-62, seeking, therefore, to meet the Protestant objection that "there is one mediator . . . Jesus Christ" (1 Tim 2:5-6). Naturally enough, the Pope stresses that Mary's mediation is of a different order from Christ's, that it depends upon Christ's which is its source (§38), and is subordinate to Christ's, of which it is a participation. Much of it repeats §22.<sup>22</sup> Orthodox would certainly agree with this, but would prefer to speak of Mary's role in the communion of saints, rather than as a mediator (39).

§38 speaks of Mary's mediation as "special and extraordinary," because it is "intimately linked with her motherhood," so that it is essentially different from that "manifold co-operation" of other creatures in the redemptive work of Christ (thus LG§62). §39 explains this further by arguing that Mary's consent to motherhood was "was above all a result of her total self-giving to God in virginity" (cf. Lk 1:38), a total

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<sup>21</sup> The most informative short introduction in English to this doctrinal minefield is the article by Michael O'Carroll in his *Theotokos*, s. v., "Mediation, Mary Mediatrix."

<sup>22</sup> See above pp.105-106.

gift which represents complete openness to God. Hence “Mary became not only the ‘nursing mother’ of the Son of Man, but also ‘the associate of unique nobility’ of the Messiah and Redeemer” (note the change in Christological titles, from “Son of Man” to “Messiah and Redeemer”). So, by her union “in burning charity” with the work of her Son, she “entered, in a way all her own, into the one mediation between God and men which is the mediation of the man Christ Jesus.” Hence, she can be said to have cooperated with Jesus in his earthly mission by reason of her “fullness of grace.” Many a Protestant may raise an eyebrow at these assertions, thinking of the Synoptic texts on Mary during the public life; John Paul lists them (Lk 11:28; 8:20-21; Mk 3:32-35; Mt 12:47-50), but comments that “Jesus Christ was preparing her ever more completely to become their mother in the order of grace.” He then simply adds Jn 2:1-12; 19:25-27, as if to clinch the argument. This is not exactly dialogue, but a papal encyclical is hardly the place to point out that those who question the historicity of the scene in Jn 19:25-27 still have to provide a satisfactory explanation of the words “Behold your mother.”

The same could be said about the presence of Mary with the apostles in the Upper Room, after the Resurrection and Ascension. §40 sees her as present with the infant Church, praying with the apostles, and therefore continuing Christ’s redeeming work. And if one believes in the Communion of Saints, this interceding for the world must and will continue throughout human history (§40). Again citing LG§62, he writes, “The Church expresses her faith in this truth by invoking Mary ‘under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix,’” names which, are alien to Protestantism, but would resonate familiarly in Orthodox ears.

He then elaborates on the eschatological importance of Mary and the church, introducing a discourse on the dogma of her Assumption, emphasizing that she can contribute in a special way to the union of the pilgrim Church on earth with the eschatological Communion of Saints in heaven precisely because she already enjoys the fullness of the fruits of redemption. So far, this is logical, and would find agreement

among the Orthodox.<sup>23</sup> But then comes the boldest and most surprising step in the entire encyclical, when he argues that if Mary was singularly united with Christ at his first coming, “she also has that specifically maternal role of mediatrix of mercy at his final coming” (§41). It is significant that in the support of this statement he cites only one sermon of St. Bernard and one reference to Leo XIII (see footnote 110). There is enough evidence of this type of preaching in the Latin West, but there is equally a large block of theologians who are most uneasy about it. Certainly, there is no official teaching either way on the matter, but O’Carroll mentions that at the Second Vatican Council, “One speaker, Cardinal Wyszynski, representing the seventy Polish bishops, referred to Mary as Mediatrix of all graces as an accepted doctrine.” The statement by John Paul II certainly fits into this framework, but, as O’Carroll observes, “Vatican II had not defined, nor unequivocally declared, that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mediatrix of all graces. Theologians retain the freedom granted them by LG§54.”<sup>24</sup> For example, many who are quite happy to call Mary a Mediatrix and Advocate are far from happy to say Mediatrix of *all* graces.

## 2: Mary in the Life of the Church and of every Christian (§§42-47)

By now, the encyclical is largely a recapitulation of key points, relying heavily on LG, and underscoring major points of Vatican II’s teaching and of Catholic tradition. Mary is united with her son, the Redeemer, and hence with the Church; she is united with all generations through faith and hope. The cult of Mary, as St. Ambrose pointed out, expresses the link between the mother of Christ and the Church, of which she is the “‘model’” and the “‘figure.’” “The Church too is ‘called mother and virgin,’ and these

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<sup>23</sup> Among others, Kallistos Ware writes, “The belief in the Assumption of the Mother of God is best understood in eschatological terms.” See “The Mother of God in Orthodox Theology and Devotion,” *Mary’s Place in Christian Dialogue*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc., 1983), 178.

<sup>24</sup> O’Carroll, 244-5.

names have a profound biblical and theological justification” (42). So §43 becomes a meditation on the Church as mother, accepting God’s word with fidelity, bringing forth children conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God (LG§63), and following the example of Mary as a virgin faithful to her spouse (LG§64).

§44 is repetitive, until at the end we read:

The piety of the Christian people has always very rightly sensed a profound link between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the eucharist: This is a fact that can be seen in the liturgy of both the West and the East, in the traditions of the Religious Families, in the modern movements of spirituality, including those for youth, and in the pastoral practice of the Marian Shrines. Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist.

There is not much comfort here for Protestantism or for the Orthodox either; the view is from Krakow towards Czestochowa.

The meditation continues, rather diffusely, interpreting Jn 19:25-27 as both history and symbolism. It may be summarized as “Motherhood always establishes a unique and unrepeatable relationship between two people” so it is with Mary, and so it should be with each Christian disciple, in the order of grace (§45). (This is an echo of Florovsky’s remark in 1949, “Christian thought moves always in the dimension of personalities, not in the realm of general ideas. It apprehends the mystery of the Incarnation as a mystery of the Mother and the Child.”)<sup>25</sup> And then, at last, (§46) comes the most specific remark about Mary and women: “This Marian dimension of Christian life takes on a special importance in relation to women and their status. In fact, femininity has a unique relationship with the Mother of the Redeemer, a subject which can be studied in greater depth elsewhere.”<sup>26</sup> Here he simply observes that “God in the incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry of a woman” (§46).<sup>27</sup> The final paragraph of this section, 47, is simply a collection of

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<sup>25</sup> Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, 179.

<sup>26</sup> The reference is to the encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, issued on 15 August 1988, at the close of the Marian Year.

<sup>27</sup> This relationship of Christ and his Mother is the underlying thesis in recent Orthodox statements on the role of women in the Orthodox Church. See “The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and The Question of the Ordination of Women,” report from The Inter-Orthodox Theological Consultation On

citations mostly from Paul VI and the Council that “Knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.” The Orthodox would say the same thing, that is, that in Orthodoxy, an understanding of the mystery of the Church is linked to an understanding of the mystery of the Theotokos (§47).

### **3: The Meaning of the Marian Year (§§48-50)**

The reasons for choosing this particular year have already been explained,<sup>28</sup> but here the Pope asks what the Spirit “wishes to say to the Church in the present phase of history.” “In this context,” he continues, “the Marian Year is meant to promote a new and more careful reading of what the Council said about the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church” (§48). He stresses that he is speaking not only of doctrine, but of the life of faith, of spirituality and of devotion.

This is the customary language of a Vatican document seeking clearly but tactfully to point out that the Bishop of Rome (without invoking any authority--the letter is addressed to his fellow bishops as well as to the faithful) would like to see something different from what is actually happening. What he says is short but very significant. He points to St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716: canonized in 1947),<sup>29</sup> whose *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* has often been the subject of intense debate among Catholics, many of whom find it difficult to accept. It is often said that the translations are inaccurate, and the book is better known for lines quoted out of context than as a densely argued work demanding close study. Be that as it may, it does

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Women in the Church at Rhodes, 30 October-7 November, 1988 (The Ecumenical Patriarchate, December 1988), 3-4 and “Church and Culture,” Second International Orthodox Women’s Consultation, Orthodox Academy of Crete, 16-24 January 1990 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990), 15.

<sup>28</sup> See above, p.97, notes 3 and 4.

<sup>29</sup> See O’Carroll, s.v., “Montfort, Louis Marie Grignon De, St.”

represent the quantitatively and qualitatively superlative in Roman Catholic devotion. Once again, one senses that the inspiration is from Czestochowa.

The final paragraph §50 confirms this. It recapitulates the reasons given above on p. 97 with special reference to “the territories of what was then called Rus’.” of which there is more detail in the next chapter.

The conclusion (§§50-51) needs no comment. It is a very personal, and quite moving, meditation on one of the greatest Latin anthems to Mary, much used in Advent, the *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, from which the title of the Encyclical is taken.



## Chapter 8

### **John Paul II and the Orthodox Churches (1987-1988)**

Within little more than a year of the publication of RM on 25 March 1987, John Paul II issued three other documents which, though officially addressed to members of the Roman Communion, are certainly carefully composed so as to speak also to the Orthodox Churches. To complete our story, these must now be examined.

#### *Duodecimum saeculum*<sup>1</sup> **Twelfth Centenary of Nicaea II** **(4 December 1987)**

This is an Apostolic letter commemorating the twelfth centenary of the Second Council of Nicaea, dated on what is, both in the East and in the West, the feast day of St. John of Damascus. It speaks of the legitimacy of revering icons, and of the part played by the Bishop of Rome at that Council in their defense.

Obviously, this letter discusses a matter of prime importance to the Orthodox Churches. The Pope uses the occasion, and the topic, to bring into the open his views on some of the issues which are in question between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. He also moves to a clear declaration of his ultimate purpose--the restoration of full communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The commemoration of this twelfth centenary of the Second Council of Nicaea (787) by the Roman See is paralleled by a commemoration by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Holy Synod. They indeed published an Encyclical on the event

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<sup>1</sup> TPS 33 (1988): 100-105.

“which underlines the theological importance and the ecumenical significance of the seventh and last Council fully recognized by both the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church” (100).

“The lawfulness of the veneration of icons” is the doctrine which this Council defined. And, John Paul adds, not only the doctrine, but the ground on which it was defined, is important.

The importance given by Nicaea II to the argument of tradition, and more specifically the unwritten tradition, constitutes for us Catholics as well as for our Orthodox brethren an invitation to travel again together the road of the undivided Church and to re-examine in her light the differences between us that the centuries of separation have accentuated, in order to rediscover that for which Jesus prayed to the Father (cf. John 17:11, 20-21), full communion in visible unity (100).

He then introduces the expected statement about the position of the Bishop of Rome at this last Council of the undivided Church, but it is interesting to note how he phrases it. The first sentence puts the Bishop of Rome and the Eastern Patriarchs on a level, and the second makes the Church of Rome (note: not its Bishop) “irreplaceable.”<sup>2</sup>

It was accepted that the decisions of an Ecumenical Council were valid only if the Bishop of Rome had offered his collaboration and if the Eastern Patriarchs had given their agreement. In this process, the role of the Church of Rome was recognized as irreplaceable (§I).

The reference for this text cites “the priest John, representing the Eastern Patriarchs”(§I).

The first section of this brief four part letter clearly states what he believes was the position of the Bishop of Rome in the undivided Church, and hence, what it would be in the reunited Church.

The second section notes that Patriarch Taraise, the moderator of the Council, recognized in the Bishop of Rome, Hadrian I, “who has inherited the chair of the divine Apostle Peter,” and who, “vested with the supreme priesthood, presides legitimately, by the will of God, over the religious hierarchy”(emphasis added: § II).

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction is made because the Bishop of Rome holds authority as witness of the faith of the Church of Rome.

Evidence of this is the fact that it was the Roman legates who proposed that an icon be brought before the meeting “so that the Fathers could pay homage to it,” and that this action of the representatives of the Bishop of Rome was decisive in the final outcome of the Council in favor of the veneration of images. Thus John Paul can write:

The last Ecumenical Council recognized by both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches is a remarkable example of collaboration between the See of Rome and a conciliar assembly. It was set in the perspective of patristic ecclesiology of communion, founded on tradition, which the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council has justly highlighted (§II).

In this same section, he introduces two issues which must contribute to mending the break between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. The first is the development of tradition:

As the Church developed in time and space, her understanding of the tradition which she carries has also known stages of development, the study of which constitutes an obligatory itinerary for ecumenical dialogue and all authentic theological reflection (§II). [This sentence refers to the understanding of ‘tradition’ (*paradosis*), by the Fathers of Nicaea II.]

The second is the living magisterium of the Church, with reference to the interpretation of Scripture or of apostolic tradition:

The authentic interpretation of the “word of God, written or transmitted, has been entrusted to the one living magisterium of the Church whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ” (LG, *Dei Verbum*, 10). It is in equal fidelity to the common treasure of tradition which goes back to the Apostles that the Churches today are trying to examine carefully the reasons for their differences and how to overcome them (§II).

The Pope’s contention here is that in dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, there are available two criteria of doctrine, namely unwritten tradition and the living authority of the teaching Church today, criteria which are not available to participants engaged in ecumenical dialogue with the Churches of the Reformation, insofar as the latter stand by the twin principles of ‘Scripture alone’ and private interpretation of Scripture (§II).

The third section of this letter then introduces some important points about the veneration of images. The iconoclasts argued that the veneration of images is idolatry.

St. Basil and Nicaea II in the East and Pope St. Gregory the Great in Rome defended the didactic aspect of the veneration of images on the basis that the veneration of the image is directed to its prototype (§III).

But, John Paul continues, the debate between the iconoclasts and iconodules was at bottom, Christological. The iconoclasts charged that to depict Christ in any way would lead the artist to give either a Monophysite portrait, by overemphasizing his divinity to the detriment of his humanity, or a Nestorian one, by portraying only his humanity, with no representation of his divinity. Hence, the argument was far more than a debate over images or no images. In fact, “it called into question the whole Christian vision of the reality of the Incarnation and therefore the relationship of God and the world, grace and nature, in short, the specific character of the ‘new covenant’ that God made with humanity in Jesus Christ” (§III).

John Paul II concludes:

Therefore the iconography of Christ involves the whole faith in the reality of the Incarnation and its inexhaustible meaning for the Church and the world. If the Church practices it, it is because she is convinced that the God revealed in Jesus Christ has truly redeemed and sanctified the flesh and the whole sensible world, that is man with his five senses, to allow him to be ever renewed in the image of his Creator (cf. Col. 3:10) (§III).

Therefore, in the fourth and concluding section of this Apostolic letter, Pope John Paul II speaks of what we may call the ‘sacramental’ value of icons, in that their beauty opens our eyes to see God in the beauty of sense-objects.

The growing secularization of society shows that it is becoming largely estranged from spiritual values, from the mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ, from the reality of the world to come. Our most authentic tradition, which we share with our Orthodox brethren, teaches us that the language of beauty placed at the service of faith is capable of reaching people’s hearts and making them know from within the One whom we dare to represent in images (§IV).

Indeed, in this final section, he writes of the “holy *Theotokos*” of the Greek and Slav Churches, which, basing themselves on Sts. Nicephorous of Constantinople and Theodore the Studite, “considered the veneration of icons as an integral part of the liturgy, like the celebration of the Word” (§IV). This, like so much in SA, is a clear

option for dialogue with Orthodoxy, for one can hardly imagine that sentence as commending itself to Protestant minds.

*Euntes in Mundum*<sup>3</sup>  
 “Going into the world . . .”  
 Apostolic Letter on the Millennium of the  
 Baptism of Kievan Russ  
 (25 January 1988)

This Apostolic Letter, released on the date of the Conversion of St. Paul, is addressed to no one in particular; indeed, it is, perhaps uniquely among papal letters, addressed to no one at all! It would have been more accurate to entitle it an essay. However, Pope John Paul says about it later, in his message to the Ukrainian Catholics, that he had written EM to prepare all the Catholic faithful for the millennium of Christianity in Kievan Rus'. It is, in fact, also addressed to the Russian Orthodox Church. Pope John Paul continues with some themes introduced previously, and introduces some new ones. He considers them “in the light of the indications of the Second Vatican Council and in the historical perspective of the millennium” (§14).

Noting the significance of the baptism of Princess Olga and her grandson Prince Vladimir in bringing the sons and daughters of many peoples and nations to Christianity, he points out that these included the Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian nations and ultimately reached the Urals, northern Asia, the Pacific coast and beyond (§4).

But if God alone determines “the fullness of time,” it is also true that he makes preparation for it through human agencies. For the lands and nations just mentioned, this preparation originated in the initiative of the Church of Constantinople, in the mission of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. By their evangelization of the Slavs in the 9th century, and by their creation of the liturgical language of Old Slavonic, they prepared the way for the baptism of Princess Olga around 955 and the subsequent baptism of her grandson,

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<sup>3</sup> *Origins* 17, no. 42 (31 March 1988): 710-18.

Vladimir in 988, the event which led to the “permanent and definitive conversion of the people of Rus” (§3).

In stressing the importance of the “Slav inculturation” made possible by Sts. Cyril and Methodius, he returns to the themes of his own encyclical letter, *Slavorum Apostoli*, once more going into detail about the work of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in bringing the Greco-Byzantine Christian heritage to the Slavs and making it their own. Naturally enough, one theme is that of the unity of the Eastern and Western Churches.

For it must be emphasized quite firmly, in fidelity to historical truth, that in the eyes of the two holy brothers from Thessalonika there was introduced into Rus’ with the Slav language the style of the Byzantine church, which at that time was still in full communion with Rome (emphasis added: §3).

He continues: “The fullness of time for the baptism of the people of Rus’ thus came at the end of the first millennium, when the church was undivided” (emphasis added). This “represents a good omen and a hope.” And further:

There was a the church of the East and there was the church of the West . . . but there existed full communion with reciprocal relations between the East and the West, between Constantinople and Rome. And it was the undivided church of the East and the West which received and helped the church in Kiev. . . . Prince Vladimir noticed that there existed this unity between the church and Europe, and he therefore maintained relations not only with Constantinople but also with the West and specifically with Rome, whose bishop was recognized as the one who presided over the communion of the whole church (emphasis added: §4).

And at this point, in the very last line of Part II, the Pope touches lightly, in a subordinate clause, on a matter of major importance.

Through the new center of ecclesial life which Kiev became from the moment of its baptism, the Gospel and the grace of the faith reached those populations and those lands which today are linked, as regards the Orthodox Church, with the patriarchate of Moscow, and with the Ukrainian Catholic Church, whose full communion with the See of Rome was renewed at Brest (§4).

As he has consistently done in these documents, Pope John Paul II has directly introduced an issue which is a subject of disagreement between Catholics and Orthodox, and more especially between the Slavs who are Orthodox and those who are Eastern Rite

Catholics. Kallistos Ware states openly, “The Union of Brest has embittered relations between Orthodoxy and Rome from 1596 until the present day.”<sup>4</sup>

This is a particularly sensitive issue because of the illegal status of the Ukrainian Catholic Church after its suppression by Stalin in 1946. It is made even more complicated by Stalin’s having used the Russian Orthodox Church to help in its suppression. Yet in this letter, with its generous tributes to the Orthodox Church, and even to the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Bishop of Rome simply states the historical fact about the Union of Brest, in a quite neutral phrase to which no Orthodox could take exception. One can see why the Ukrainian Catholics were unenthusiastic about this particular papal letter.

Part III of this letter, the longest section, might well be entitled “Faith and Culture.” In paying tribute to the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Slavic peoples, John Paul is not only assuring the Eastern Churches, especially the Orthodox, how much he personally values and respects their history and their culture, but he is also instructing Western Catholics about the Eastern Churches.<sup>5</sup>

This section takes up once again a theme which he developed in RM:

The Eastern Slavs have developed a history, spirituality, liturgical traditions and disciplinary customs proper to themselves, in harmony with the tradition of the Eastern churches, as well as certain forms of theological reflection on revealed truth which, while differing from those used in the West, are at the same time a complement to the latter (emphasis added: §6.).

So much might be expected. But, as if to reassure the Orthodox readers (by now it is clear that he has them principally in mind), he cites statements made by the Second Vatican Council, affirming that they stressed that the church of the West has drawn on the treasury of churches of the East for “its liturgy, spiritual tradition and jurisprudence.” One may note especially the mention of ‘jurisprudence’. This leads

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<sup>4</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 105; see, at the end of the thesis, Detached Note C: “The Union of Brest.”

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that he begins by mentioning a point frequently made by Orthodox women, that St. Olga was, in fact, the source of the baptism of Rus’. “[Vladimir] associated himself with the decision of his grandmother, St. Olga, and gave definitive and stable form to her work” (§5).

naturally into several important points about the ecclesiology of the Eastern churches, again referring to the Second Vatican Council, and again making no distinction between Catholics and Orthodox. Regarding the divine liturgy and the eucharist, two phrases deserve attention. He speaks of Eastern Christians as ““united with their bishop,”” and a few sentences later, adds that ““through the rite of concelebration their bond with one another is made manifest.”” Both for the Orthodox and for Catholics, this is a formulation of the definition of ecclesial unity, ecclesial unity being demonstrated by those whom they mention in the dyptichs and with whom they are in communion (§7).

He draws attention to the spirituality of the Eastern Slavs, especially ““their characteristic devotion to Christ’s passion, their sensitivity to the mystery of suffering linked with the redemptive efficacy of the cross”” (§7). In the same context, he mentions the death of Sts. Boris and Gleb, a symbol for the Slavs of a certain type of spiritual suffering and sacrifice. Boris and Gleb, sons of Prince Vladimir, were deprived of their rightful inheritance by their older brother, Svyatopolk. In a literal response to the gospel, they surrendered without resistance, and were murdered by Svyatopolk’s emissaries. Although they were murdered as victims in a political quarrel, and not for the faith, they were canonized. Their special title, ““Passion Bearers,”” was conferred because it was felt that they had voluntarily shared in the Passion of Christ. According to Kallistos Ware, ““Russians have always laid great emphasis on the place of suffering in the Christian life.””<sup>6</sup>

Here we must mention John Paul’s Apostolic Letter entitled *Salvifici Doloris*, on the salvific value of suffering, dated 11 February 1984, the feast of the Blessed Virgin of Lourdes. This is in fact a meditation on Jesus as the Suffering Servant of the Lord, and a call to all Catholics not to be afraid of pain, but to use it well. Presupposing this earlier letter as read, it is not surprising to find in this present letter, EM, that great stress is

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<sup>6</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 88.



placed on the role which suffering has played in the history of the Slav peoples (and they have throughout history suffered more than most).

John Paul uses the Old Slavonic word referring to Christ's suffering: "This spirituality finds its fullest expression in the praise given to our "sweetest" (*sladchaishiy*) Lord Jesus Christ in the mystery of the suffering and *kenosis* which he took upon himself in the incarnation and in his death on the cross (cf. Phil. 2:5-8)." The suffering is "illuminated in the liturgy by the light of the risen Christ," anticipated by the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor and realized at the Resurrection. He uses the word *voskresenie*, used by Slavic Christians to proclaim Christ's resurrection (§7).

He refers to the importance of Kiev and the famous "*Pecherskaya Lavra*" (Monastery of the Caves) in Eastern Slavic monasticism. It is significant that this monastery is mentioned, for it was the most influential in Kievan Russia. Founded around 1051 by St. Antony, a Russian monk from Mount Athos, it was reorganized by St. Theodosius, his successor (d. 1074). Theodosius was aware of the social consequences of Christianity, and identified himself with the poor, in much the same way as St. Francis of Assisi in the West. St. Theodosius is seen as a model of Christ's "self-emptying," that *kenosis* mentioned above by John Paul.<sup>7</sup>

It is against this background of suffering and future glory that one perceives the influence of the *starets* (spiritual guide) on the great Russian writers as well as on the simple people. This tradition of spiritual guidance by elders (often priests, but sometimes lay monks or nuns), so important in Russian spirituality, reached its zenith in the nineteenth century, when the hermitage of Optino in Russia influenced a number of writers, including Gogol, Komiakov, Dostoievsky, Soloviev and Tolstoi.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in Russia, "religious art is seen to be pervaded by a deep spirituality and by a high level of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 47-48, 93, 133.

mystical inspiration,” as is evidenced by the icons and cathedrals of Kiev (Holy Wisdom) and Novgorod (eleventh century) (§8).

In Part IV, the final section of this document, he declares his intentions openly, and, it could be said, they have been the same since his very first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, namely the restoration of full communion between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.

The baptism of Rus’ took place, as I have already pointed out, at a time when the two forms of Christianity had already developed: the Eastern form, linked with Byzantium, and the Western, linked with Rome, while the church continued to remain one and undivided. This consideration, as we celebrate the millennium of the baptism received by the Eastern Slav peoples at Kiev, cannot fail to enkindle in us an even greater desire for full communion in Christ with these sister churches, and to impel us to undertake fresh studies and take new steps to favor it (§9).

He continues,

Moreover, the gradual return to harmony between Rome and Constantinople, and likewise among the churches which remain in full communion with these centers, cannot fail, especially today, to exercise a positive influence on the Orthodox and Catholic heirs of the baptism of Kiev (emphasis added: §9).

There is perhaps more to the above paragraph than meets the eye. The insertion of the innocent-sounding adverb “likewise” touches, very diplomatically, on a serious problem in the Orthodox Churches, that of unity among themselves. That may be the reason for his phrase about a “return to harmony” between Rome and Constantinople “and likewise among the churches which remain in full communion with these centers.”

Still, in spite of all the difficulties, he hopes that the bilateral meetings between Orthodox and Catholics may have “a positive influence on the Orthodox and Catholic heirs of the baptism of Kiev.” We then read:

what an advantage this would be for the whole people of God if the Orthodox and Catholic heirs of the baptism of Kiev, stirred by a renewed awareness of their original communion, would take up its challenge and repeat for the Christians of our time the ecumenical message which flows therefrom, urging them to hasten their steps toward the goal of the full unity willed by Christ (emphasis added: §9)!

This is certainly the most unequivocal statement of John Paul II’s ‘grand strategy’, namely to put reunion (or, as he would say, “the restoration of full communion”) between

Rome and Orthodoxy at the top of the agenda, and to hope that the resultant Communion would spur other Christians to seek such complete unity.

He is not, of course, foolishly sanguine, and he presents his case with moderation. He quotes the Second Vatican Council in this problem of unity and diversity:

“For many centuries, the churches of the East and of the West went their own ways, though a brotherly communion of faith and sacramental life bound them together. If disagreements of belief and discipline arose among them, the Roman See acted by common consent as moderator (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 14)” (§10).

If this is indeed a claim to universal jurisdiction, it is implicit, and very delicately phrased; for though the words “by common consent” certainly imply that this role of the Roman See was freely accepted in the East, they leave open the question whether the Eastern Churches were bound to accept it as part of the never-changing structure of the Church Universal.

Then, to answer the Orthodox question of what this role of the Roman See would mean in practice, for the future, in terms of self-government, he again quotes the same Decree:

“To remove any shadow of doubt, then, this sacred synod solemnly declares that the churches of the East, while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole church, have the power to govern themselves according to their own disciplines, . . . (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 16)” (§10).

Most important of all, §10 of the letter concludes with these words:

From the decree there clearly emerges the characteristic disciplinary autonomy which the Eastern Churches enjoy: this is not the result of privileges granted by the church of Rome, but of the law itself, which these churches have observed since apostolic times (§10).

John Paul ends Part IV, the section might be entitled “Towards Full Communion,” by recapitulating briefly the intention of these documents under consideration. He speaks again of sin and redemption, referring to Romans 5:12-15; he speaks of the unity of the infant Church in the Upper Room, quoting again Acts 2:42. He speaks of the Holy Trinity, and especially of the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, of the progress

of “dialogue between churches and ecclesial communities,” and relates this to the unity of the church at the time of the baptism of Rus’ and even further back, to the unity of the church with Christ and his prayer for unity in the Upper Room (Jn 17:20 ff). He begs his readers to remember that full communion is a gift, and will not be the result of human efforts alone (§11).

In the Holy Spirit, the life of the church reaches unexpected depths and dimensions. Feeling and living the presence of the Paraclete and his gifts is a peculiar characteristic of the Oriental tradition, the profound pneumatological doctrine of which constitutes a precious treasure for the whole church (§11).

In saying this, he is actually implying that since the unity of the church is ultimately a gift, and Holy Spirit is a source of that gift, and since the “Oriental tradition” has a special emphasis on the Holy Spirit, those churches of that tradition (especially the Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholics in traditionally Orthodox areas) might be called on to play a leading role in this journey “Towards Full Communion.”

As he draws this letter to a close, John Paul refers to his encyclical letter, *Slavorum Apostoli*, and to the role of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, from which, he reiterates, the church of Kiev also originated. Although their work began in the East, they maintained “the link and unity with Rome” and “they were bound to preserve essential unity among themselves.” That is why he proclaimed them, almost at the beginning of his pontificate in 1980, patrons of Europe. For him, the Eastern and Western churches are “the two lungs” of a single body, as he first stated in *Redemptoris Mater* (§12).

This Apostolic letter closes by restating that this celebration of the baptism of Kievan Rus’ has been brought to the attention “of the whole Catholic Church,” so that the faithful may join

with all the heirs of this baptism, whatever their religious confession, nationality or dwelling place; with all our Orthodox and Catholic brothers and sisters. In a special way we join with all the beloved sons and daughters of the Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian nations. To those who live in their homeland as also to those who dwell in America, Western Europe and other parts of the world (§14).

He continues, “In a special way, of course, this is the feast of the Russian Orthodox Church, (emphasis added) which has its center in Moscow and which we call with joy ‘sister church.’” This specific reference to the Russian Orthodox Church is, one feels, meant to pull the reader up with a start. Up to now, John Paul has refrained from naming exactly to whom he is speaking, using the extremely polite phrase, “Rus”<sup>9</sup> Here, he is no longer speaking to all of the heirs of the baptism of St. Vladimir, but to the Russian Orthodox Church, which, he says, “has received in great part the inheritance of ancient Christian Rus’, linking herself with and remaining faithful to the church of Constantinople” (emphasis added). Then, pressing his theme of the reunion of the churches, and linking it, as always, with the documents of the Second Vatican Council, he continues:

This church, like the other Orthodox churches, has true sacraments, particularly--by virtue of the apostolic succession--the eucharist and the priesthood, whereby she remains united to the Catholic Church with very close links (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 15). And together with the churches mentioned she makes intense efforts “to perpetuate in a communion of faith and charity those family ties which ought to thrive between local churches as between sisters (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 14)” (§15).

So, he can clearly state that his intention in publishing this message to the Russian Orthodox Church is to further the progress toward complete reunion:

I am fully convinced that the millennium celebrations of all the heirs of the baptism of Vladimir . . . will bring to all a new light able to pierce the darkness of the difficult centuries now past . . . (§15).

The paragraph which follows makes clear the place of the previous documents in a progression which would bring the Catholic and Orthodox Churches together in a search for reunion, with the *Theotokos* as the common ground:

A special expression of our union and sharing in the millennium of the baptism of Russ [*sic*], as also an expression of the ardent desire to attain full and perfect communion with the sister churches of the East, is constituted by the very proclamation of the Marian year as is explicitly stated in the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*: “Even though we are still experiencing the painful effects of the separation

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<sup>9</sup> The English “Russ” is used in the *Origins* translation of *Euntes in Mundum*, and “Rus” in *Magnum Baptismi Donum*. In the opinion of Fr. John Meyendorff, this is simply a spelling error in the translation; the correct term when referring to the Slavic peoples is “Rus’.” In fact, in the Latin text of both, “Rus” is always used.

which took place . . . we can say that in the presence of the mother of Christ we feel that we are true brothers and sisters within that messianic people which is called to be the one family of God on earth (RM34)" (§16).

Now, in the final paragraph before the conclusion, there is a subtle shift, which may even be called a dramatic one. Throughout this letter, Pope John Paul has gone to great lengths to speak in the language of the Orthodox, as he is writing to announce to Catholics the celebration of the millennium of Christianity about to be held by the Russian Orthodox Church. He speaks of the *Znamenie* icon of Mary, called by the Orthodox, "The Image of the Most Holy Theotokos of the Sign." The image of Mary in this icon shows her with hands upraised in prayer, with the Saviour Emmanuel on her breast. The name of the icon derives from Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel." It is a dogmatic statement of the Incarnation of the Son of God who received his humanity from the Mother of God. Orthodox iconography also associates the icon of "The Sign" with the "man clothed with linen" in Ezekiel 9:2, 10:2 and the "Son of Man" in Revelation 1:13-15.<sup>10</sup>

This is among the most ancient and revered icons of the Mother of God. She was frequently shown in this form, the Orans posture, well known in the ancient Greek and Roman world as well as in the Old Testament, and in early Christian times; indeed, Leonid Ouspensky writes that the earliest known image of this icon of the sign comes from the fourth century, in the Roman catacomb "Cimitero Maggiore." He cites N. P. Kondakov (*Iconography of the Mother of God*, vol I.), who says that the fourth century fresco seems to be a copy of an even more ancient icon of the Mother of God.<sup>11</sup> This image of the Mother of God Orans with Christ is used as an altar-piece in Orthodox Churches and "is an iconographic revealing of the Church personified by the Mother of God, who had confined within Herself the unconfined God."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Fortounatto, 141.

<sup>11</sup> Ouspensky and Lossky, 77, 80.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 77.

Again, one of the most visible and central Orthodox beliefs is that the Mother of God personifies the Church. Thus in referring to this particular icon of the Mother of God, John Paul is speaking of the Theotokos at the very origin of the undivided Church.

There is, however, a second phrase which is not typically Orthodox, but would in fact immediately draw the attention of the Eastern Rite Catholic reader. He says, "The incarnate Word whom Mary brought into the world remains forever in her heart as is well shown by the famous icon 'Znamenie,' which portrays the Virgin at prayer with the Word of God engraved upon her heart" (emphasis added: §16). The devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is particularly cherished by Ukrainian Catholics, but is not part of the liturgical practice of the Ukrainian Orthodox.<sup>13</sup>

At this point, it would seem that Pope John Paul is moving into dialogue with the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the letter to whom will appear only a month later. After this long letter directed in fact though not in words to the Russian Orthodox Christians, he could hardly fail to write to the Catholics of the Ukrainian Church.

*Magnum Baptismi Donum*<sup>14</sup>  
"The great gift of Baptism . . ."  
A Message

To Ukrainian Catholics on the occasion of the millennium of the baptism of Kievan  
Rus'  
(14 February 1988)

This "message," issued on the feast of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, is addressed by name to the Ukrainian Catholic faithful, to Cardinal Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, and his fellow-bishops of the Ukrainian Church.

The previous document was an Apostolic letter, giving it a certain official status, written, as he says in the opening of *Magnum Baptismi Donum*, "to all the

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<sup>13</sup> This devotion began in the seventeenth century as part of the anti-Jansenist movement in France, under John Eudes; in 1643 he introduced a feast under this title in the houses of his religious Congregation. It spread through parts of northern France from 1643, but provoked strong disapproval from Rome in 1669; after a long, complicated history, irrelevant for our purposes, it emerged in 1944 under Pius XII as a feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (cf. NCE, vol. 7, 383-84, "Immaculate Heart of Mary," by J.F. Murphy).

<sup>14</sup> *Origins* 17, no. 47 (5 May 1988): 816-18.

Catholic faithful in order to ensure an adequate spiritual preparation” for the millennium of Christianity in Kievan Rus’. That letter was, in fact, as we have repeatedly observed, obliquely but clearly directed also to the Russian Orthodox Church.

MBD is entitled a “message” (*nuntius*). It is more personal in tone and is specifically directed to the Ukrainian Catholic Church, still officially forbidden in the Soviet Union since 1949, and still illegal at the time of this letter. The main significance of calling it a “message” is that this clearly excludes any hint that the text contains legislation,<sup>15</sup> a subtle point but not without significance in the context of Catholic-Orthodox relations.

He had written *Euntes in Mundum*, with an eye on the Orthodox, recalling that the Ukrainian, Russian and Byelorussian peoples all share a common background by virtue of the cultural heritage received from the baptism of St. Olga and her grandson, St. Vladimir. So now in MBD, he reminds Ukrainian Catholics of the same truth, but stressing the unifying effect of baptism, and underlining the obligations implicit in it. The Second Vatican Council, in its decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, states that baptism “constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it.” For baptism

“is oriented toward a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation, such as Christ himself willed it to be, and finally, toward a complete participation in eucharistic communion” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22) (§2:emphasis added).

Likewise, the common history shared by the Catholic and Orthodox of the region of Kievan Rus’ should be firm ground for a reunion between the churches there, for “the Ukrainian people are geographically and historically linked to the city of Kiev, and thus have special reason to rejoice at the thousandth anniversary” (§3).

He reminds them, too, that the Croatian and Slovenian nations, in what is now Yugoslavia, were evangelized in 650, more than three hundred years before the work of

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<sup>15</sup> Morrisey, 5.



Sts. Cyril and Methodius, and that these southern Slavs, the first Slav nations to embrace Christianity, have remained for 1300 years in unbroken Communion with Rome. He clearly wants to reassure the Ukrainians that they are not alone. And once again (quoting himself four times in *Slavorum Apostoli*), he praises the work of Cyril and Methodius, stressing the importance of their creating and using Old Slavonic as the liturgical language and attributing the rise of Slavic culture to their work (§3).

§4 directly addresses the historical events which have marked the religious history of the Ukraine, notably the Council of Florence, and the Union of Brest, of which he writes, “The union was meant to build up a church which in both the East and West would enjoy that full and visible unity which has its root in one faith and one Baptism” (§4).

In the next section, referring to the sentence quoted above, he makes a subtle change, almost a leap, from recalling the sad tale which is the church history of the Ukraine:

It is in this spirit that we ought to judge the other attempts that were made through the centuries, in different historical situations, to re-establish full communion. These attempts were not always properly understood and approved, at times they had the unforeseen and undesired result of inflicting fresh wounds within the Christian community (§5).

But then, in the same paragraph, he brings the discussion to the present, recalling the dialogue which is taking place between Catholics and Orthodox and the positive direction it is taking.

Without mentioning it by name, he makes a pointed reference to the illegal status of the Ukrainian Catholic Church:

Nevertheless, the communities of faithful born of these attempts, who for centuries have maintained their communion with the See of Rome, in obedience to an impulse from the depth of their consciences, clearly have a right to the solidarity of the Catholic community and especially of the bishop of Rome (§5).

These words, though ostensibly addressed to Cardinal Lubachivsky and the Ukrainian Catholics, are clearly directed in a different direction: one does not refer to the addressees of one's own letter as "communities of the faithful."

So in congratulating the Ukrainian Catholic Church on their celebration of the millennium, he exhorts them to strive for ecumenical progress, speaking of the "ardent desire" and "eager desire" for unity which characterizes ecumenical work today, and reminding them of the new attitude evident at the Second Vatican Council, which welcomed observer delegates from many Churches. The work of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, and the decrees from the Council on the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*) and on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) cannot be set aside (§6).

In this movement toward unity between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the Eastern Rite Catholic Churches have, he insists, a primary role to play. He reiterates that the council fathers "do not see in these churches an obstacle to full communion with our Orthodox brethren" because they are preserving the heritage of the churches of the East. Few, if any, Orthodox would agree with this, of course, but one could with equal justice ask how many Eastern Rite Catholic Churches would agree with the Bishop of Rome that they have a very special role to play in building bridges to Orthodoxy, and so "building up the visible unity of the church" (§6).

This message closes with a personal greeting to Cardinal Lubachivsky and to all the clergy and the faithful of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. The Pope again reminds them of their origins from Kievan Rus', praises them for their suffering "for unity with the universal church," and expresses the hope that in the future "recognition will be given to the full right of every person to his or her own identity and profession of faith" (§7). It is a clear call for the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.<sup>16</sup> (again quoting

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<sup>16</sup> The process for legalization was, in fact, began on 1 December 1989, when Ukrainian Catholics were granted the right to register their churches officially with the Soviet government. This announcement coincided with President Mikhail Gorbachev's meeting in Rome with Pope John Paul II ("Ukrainian Catholic Church Wins Legal Status After 43-Year Ban," *New York Times*, [2 December 1989], 10).

RM), and to the praying Virgin surnamed the “Indestructible Wall” which stands in the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Kiev, “to whom 950 years ago Prince Yaroslav the Wise entrusted the city of Kiev and the whole of Rus” (§7). Last of all, there is a prayer to Mary, addressed as “Mother of Christian Unity,” “Mother of Consolation,” “Most Holy Mother of the Redeemer” and “Theotokos” (§9), and a short litany asking for “the intercession of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, of the Apostles of the Slavs, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, of St. Olga and St. Vladimir, St. Josaphat and all the saints” (§10).

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusion**

In drawing this study to a close, there is, obviously, a temptation to comment on all of the points of disagreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches raised by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II in these documents, for, as we have seen, all these documents contain references to the major questions which continue to separate the two Churches. Such a comprehensive response is not within the scope of this study. I am not going to talk about papal jurisdiction, the Filioque, original sin, the role of the magisterium or Tradition in the Church, the Uniate Churches, or any other issue of debate between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches raised in these documents. My conclusions will deal only with the papal teaching concerning the Virgin Mary as presented in the relevant documents and discussed in these pages.

A thorough reading of these documents has revealed a gradual change in the ecumenical efforts of the papacy with respect to the Virgin Mary. The focus has slowly but steadily shifted away from the from the Reformation Churches in the West--Lutheran, Anglican and Genevan--to the Orthodox East, in particular to those Orthodox Churches, whose spiritual head is the Patriarch of Constantinople. Although the popes frequently address "all Christians," and discourse on Mary's faith and the few New Testament references to her, they progressively increase the use of specific references to matters which would form a basis either for agreement or for disagreement between the Roman and the Eastern Orthodox Churches. For example, it is difficult to imagine a

theologian from the Reformed tradition getting excited about a discussion on icons of the Theotokos or on the Uniate Churches.

There is no doubt that the the efforts of the papacy, beginning with John XXIII, have resulted in a genuine evolution of Roman Catholic piety and understanding of Mary and in an increasing awareness of how much they share with the Orthodox Churches. How have the Orthodox Churches responded to what might even be called "overtures"?

A study of Orthodox publications in English from 1965 to 1989 showed that there was not a single written analysis or detailed response to any of these documents from any Orthodox, official or unofficial, theologian or non-specialist, although there were brief references to them.<sup>1</sup>

One may well ask why? The lack of any formal, written, reply is probably the result of several factors. As Pope John XXIII noted, the Orthodox approach to the Virgin Mary is a liturgical one, of veneration and celebration, and in the Orthodox Church there is a consistent reluctance to analyze her role. The resulting lack of a body of systematic 'Mariology' in Orthodox theology makes the production of a theological treatise on her a difficult task, and for some Orthodox theologians, it seems inappropriate to do so.<sup>2</sup> Another reason may be that Orthodox bishops and theologians do not routinely read papal documents. This does not mean that they are opposed to such efforts, or that they would disagree with them. I talked with Professor John Erickson of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York shortly after he returned from the Inter-Orthodox Theological Consultation, "The Place of Women in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women," Rhodes, 30 October to 7 November 1988. He said that most of the participants at that meeting were familiar with *Redemptoris Mater*, "generally agreed with the Marian aspects of it," and were aware of Pope John Paul II's

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<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 141-2.

<sup>2</sup> Lossky, "Panagia," 208-9.

attitude toward the Orthodox.<sup>3</sup> There have, of course, been references to both *Marialis Cultus* and *Redemptoris Mater* in papers given at Marian Congresses.<sup>4</sup> The Orthodox theologian from France, Dr. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, remarked favorably about *Redemptoris Mater* in a short article. She agreed with its Marian aspects, but took exception to Pope John Paul II's favorite phrase, "both lungs." She commented:

Undoubtedly this image is inspired by good intentions. Nonetheless, the Orthodox Church does not consider itself as the Eastern lung vis-a-vis the Roman Catholic Church. Does it not appear that such an expression on the part of John Paul II minimizes the theological and ecclesiological problems which for the moment present an obstacle to the full communion between our two churches?<sup>5</sup>

There may be another obvious reason for the lack of Orthodox response, and it rests on the simple fact of the reality of the Orthodox presence in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East, the historical homes of Orthodoxy. Political pressures are, no doubt, primary in the minds of Orthodox bishops and theologians. In North America, where the Orthodox Churches are, for the first time in centuries, free to govern themselves as they choose, and to speak freely, the effort to come to grips with jurisdictional disunity among themselves takes precedence over talks about unity with the Roman Church. These practical issues must be considered.

First of all, it can be claimed that, since the Second Vatican Council, the papacy has understood the position of the Theotokos in the Orthodox Church. In 1949 Fr. Georges Florovsky wrote,

the person of the Blessed Virgin can be properly understood and rightly described only in a Christological setting and context. Mariology is to be but a chapter in the treatise on the Incarnation, never to be extended into an independent 'treatise'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Conversation with Dr. John Erickson at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 17 November, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> See Kallistos Ware, "Mary Theotokos in the Orthodox Tradition," *Epiphany Journal*, Winter, 1989, 48-59.

<sup>5</sup> "Une théologienne orthodoxe réagit à l'encyclique de Jean-Paul II sur Marie," *Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, 118 (May 1987), 2, quoted by Thomas Ryan in "Ecumenical Responses to the Papal Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*" *Ecumenism* no. 87 (September 1987), 26.

<sup>6</sup> Florovsky, "The Ever-Virgin Mother of God," 173. This was done by the Vatican Council in 1963, see chapter 2, p. 17-19.

And again, Florovsky, “Mariology belongs to the very body of Christian doctrine or, if we allow the phrase, to that essential minimum of doctrinal agreement outside which no true unity of faith could even be claimed.”<sup>7</sup> This statement is a paraphrase of that written by Sergius Bulgakov in 1935,<sup>8</sup> and Bulgakov’s remark copies that of Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>9</sup>

So, it can be said, that in seeking to come to a common understanding with the Orthodox at a most fundamental level, by starting with the Virgin Mary, the popes have got it right.

With the advantage of hindsight, it is possible today to trace the origin and development of a change in papal positions towards the Orthodox. One need only contrast the approach on Pius XI mentioned in chapter 1, page 1. As we have already noted, Pope John XXIII was the first Pope in modern times who really knew the Orthodox. His experience of having lived among Orthodox gave him an appreciation of their veneration of the Virgin Mary and he understood that the place of the Mother of God in the common heritage of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches could serve as a basis for an understanding between them, in spite of other doctrinal divisions.<sup>10</sup> The time was not ripe for pursuing this idea, even if Pope John’s short tenure and the work connected with the planning and convening of the Second Vatican Council had not prevented it.

Pope Paul VI was elected in 1963, and quickly increased contacts with Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. As early as 1965 he gave unmistakable signs of the direction his statements on the Virgin Mary would take.<sup>11</sup> In December of 1965 the mutual anathemas of 1054 were lifted, giving, at least, a symbolic beginning to a dialogue

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<sup>7</sup> Florovsky, “The Ever-Virgin,” 171.

<sup>8</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, “The Virgin and the Saints in Orthodoxy,” *The Orthodox Church* (London, 1935), 137.

<sup>9</sup> See Detached note B, “The Copts,” p. 153.

<sup>10</sup> See chapter 1, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> See chapter 2, p. 19.

between Rome and Constantinople, and in 1967 Paul produced *Signum Magnum*. He writes of the Council of Ephesus, the *Theotokos*, Mary as the “New Eve,” and, among other things, of Mary as a “sign of unity . . . among all Christians.” Most Protestants would hardly agree with this approach. Although Paul VI does speak of Mary in scripture, and of her faith, the bulk of his discussion would not please the Protestant reader. However, these basic aspects of Marian thought are typically the basis for every major article on the Virgin Mary, written by an Orthodox theologian. (See, for example, Bulgakov and, Florovsky, “The Ever-Virgin Mother of God, and Lossky, “Panagia.”)

In *Marialis Cultus* in 1974, Paul VI becomes more specific in his focus. While conversing with Roman Catholics about post Vatican II Mariology, he is now making explicit what he hinted at earlier. Among these are the Roman Catholic doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, (still issues of controversy between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches), Mary as the Mother of the Church, Mary as a prototype of the Church and a model of faith, Mary and the Holy Spirit. He writes about the eschatological implications of Mary’s role in the Incarnation and speaks at length of the importance of the Marian feasts in the liturgical cycle, both of which would appeal to the Orthodox, but not to the Protestant reader.<sup>12</sup>

In October 1978, Karol Wojtyla was installed as Pope John Paul II. It is likely that he had plans for his long encyclical on Mary, *Redemptoris Mater*, at the very start of his papacy, for, as we have seen, his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* and the two which would complete his work on the Trinity, *Dives in Misericordia* and *Dominum et Vivificantem*, all contain references to the Virgin Mary. That he also was planning to link this work on Mary to a direct approach to the Orthodox Churches, is seen as early as 1981 when he wrote *A Concilio Constantinopolitano*, emphasizing the common heritage of the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. In 1985 he turns the attention of the

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<sup>12</sup> See. chapter 4, pp. 48-52.



papacy toward Slavic history, underscoring his own Slavic background. In 1987 he wrote *Redemptoris Mater*, which contains what has been called a “private conversation” with the Orthodox about the Virgin Mary.<sup>13</sup>

Little more than a year after he became Pope, John Paul II led the now annual visit of a Catholic delegation to Constantinople on the Feast of St. Andrew to “show the importance the Catholic Church attaches to this dialogue.” (He refers to the Official Catholic-Orthodox dialogue scheduled to begin within a year.) He also called it “the major event not only of this year but for centuries. We are entering a new phase of our relations” (emphasis added).<sup>14</sup> In an address to the Roman Curia on the same day he said,

“I am convinced that a rearticulation of the ancient eastern and western traditions and the balancing exchange that will result when full communion is found again may be of great importance to heal the division that came about in the West in the sixteenth century.”<sup>15</sup>

This is an exceptionally frank statement of his grand ecumenical strategy; but it is also sound ecumenical thinking, for the divisions caused by centuries of disagreements, separation and misunderstanding cannot all be solved at once, and it makes sense to begin first with the one with whom you have a basic understanding. We have seen that John Paul had in his mind, even at this early date, the veneration of the Virgin Mary which is shared by the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. In the above statement, it appears that he planned to approach the Eastern Churches, establish a common area of understanding with them first, and then try to heal the break with the churches which sprang up following the Reformation.

In this respect, the growth in understanding between the Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches which has borne fruit in recent months augurs well,

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter 7, pp. 97-98, 109-13.

<sup>14</sup> References quoted by Richard L. Stewart, “‘I want to serve Unity’: Pope John Paul II and Ecumenism,” *One in Christ* 17:3 (1981): 287.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

especially considering the role played by a mutual understanding about the Virgin Mary between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.<sup>16</sup>

As we have noted, there has been no formal response on the part of the Orthodox Churches to any of these documents, which makes a definitive and analytical reply to them difficult. All the points about the Virgin Mary which have been raised by the two popes have been written about by Orthodox theologians, though not in systematic treatises. This dogmatic reticence about the Virgin Mary on the part of Orthodox theologians is related to the reality of the *Theotokos*. It is unlikely that even more specific documents on the Virgin Mary, directed to the Orthodox, would elicit an official, written, response, but of course, one never knows.

Be that as it may, one can see a definite change in direction and emphasis on the part of the papacy, as well as an increased awareness on the part of many Orthodox theologians about what the popes are saying and what they mean about the Virgin Mary. This gives one qualified hope for ecumenical progress.

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<sup>16</sup> See Detached Note B, pp. 152-3.

**DETACHED NOTES**

## Detached Note A

### The Rosary

The use of a string of beads or counters, often a rosary, to keep track of repetitive prayer is not a Christian invention, it has been known for centuries in many countries. Its general use was first among the monks of the Eastern churches, where it was used to count the Jesus Prayer. It was taken to monasteries in the West at the beginning of the Crusades by people who had observed its use by monks in the East.<sup>1</sup>

The Rosary is thought to have originated in the 12th century in response to the need for greater participation in liturgical prayer by the unlettered faithful. As such, it began as a substitute for the full recitation of the Psalter as 50 *Paternosters*. Marian devotion followed this trend, and a Rosary in honor of Mary developed, using the salutation of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, "Hail Mary." In the early 12th century the words of Elizabeth, "Blessed art thou among women," were added.<sup>2</sup>

The Dominicans played a major role in the development of the Rosary, and in 1483 a Dominican wrote *Our Dear Lady's Psalter*, organizing the Rosary into a form similar to that used today, calling for fifteen decades corresponding to fifteen mysteries, all but two of which are used today. In the course of the sixteenth century the Rosary of fifteen mysteries became the accepted form.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913 ed., vol. 13, 184-89, "The Rosary," by H. Thurston.

<sup>2</sup> NCE, 1967 ed., vol. 12, 667-70, "Rosary," by W. A. Hinnebusch.

<sup>3</sup> O'Carroll, s.v. "The Rosary."

There was obviously a danger that the merely mechanical recitation of so many *Pater's* and *Ave's* (however distracted the mind) might be considered meritorious. In his Bull of 1569, *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices*, Pius V, a Dominican Pope, required meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary as well as recitation of the prayers for gaining the indulgences attached to it. In so doing, he assured the combination of mental and vocal prayer which the Rosary had become.<sup>4</sup> That Rosary was in a form which had developed slowly over centuries, and with only slight differences is like that used today.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Frederick M. Jelly, *Madonna: Mary in the Catholic Tradition* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1986), 184.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick M. Jelly, "Prayer Beads in World Religions: The Rosary," *Worldmission* 31 (Spring 1980): 20-25.

## **Detached Note B**

### **The Copts: The Ecumenical Initiatives of Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria**

In order to understand the Coptic position it is important to be aware of some of the historical and political background. Though the Copts have lived side-by-side with Muslims for centuries, they have had to accept a subservient place in society, discrimination in education and jobs, strictly curtailed religious freedom, and lack of representation in the government. The Suez conflict of 1956, in which Britain and France entered into collusion with Israel to re-occupy the Canal, naturally intensified the already resurgent forces of Egyptian nationalism, and of its Islamic fundamentalists. As a result, a majority of Greek and Lebanese Christians, most of whom were Orthodox, emigrated to the U.S. and Australia, leaving the native Coptic Church of Egypt almost alone, isolated in a world of Islam.

In the 1960s, with the emphasis on the rights of minorities elsewhere in the world, particularly the black revolution in the United States, resentment against this subordinate role and this discrimination began to build in the Coptic community. The election of forty-eight year old Shenouda, Cairo University educated, in mid-November 1971,<sup>1</sup> to be Patriarch of Alexandria, gave momentum to this call for the rights of Copts.

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<sup>1</sup> "Two Popes Embrace," *America* 128 (26 May 1973): 482.

The result was a strong Muslim counter-reaction, and in 1972 there were a dozen incidents of anti-Coptic violence in Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

This tension came to a head in November 1972, when someone, thought to be a Muslim, threw a Molotov cocktail into a Coptic Church in Khanka, a small town near Cairo. A few days later, when hundreds of Coptic priests and laypeople marched through the streets praying in response to the destruction of the church, a riot followed. The situation was described as very serious, and it was feared that further anti-Coptic violence would ensue.<sup>3</sup> Observers likened the situation of the Copts in Egypt to that of the Armenians in Turkey at the beginning of the twentieth century, which culminated in 1915 with the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians.<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, Patriarch Shenouda, faced with such serious threats of violence and disruption to his church and to the lives of his people, appealed for help in every direction. During 1972 he paid courtesy visits to the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Moscow and Bucharest.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, it must be observed that even before these visits, representatives of the Coptic Patriarch had in March 1972 conferred with Orthodox theologians at Balamand Seminary in Lebanon. Following the conclusions of four previous official Orthodox-Coptic theological meetings, the theologians stated, "it pleases us to affirm . . . that the traditional Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches have one faith in the Lord Jesus. . . ." And further

We are persuaded that we now only lack the agreement of these committees on the official formulation which will express our common Christological faith. Following that, the unity of faith and doctrine will be declared in a clear official voice from the churches, and communion in the Mystery of the One Lord's Table and all the Holy Mysteries will be resumed because the declaration of one faith will

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<sup>2</sup> "Letter from Cairo," *New Yorker* 48 (10 Feb. 1973): 86-87.

<sup>3</sup> "Egypt: Copts and Moslems," *Newsweek* 80 (4 Dec. 1972): 47.

<sup>4</sup> Shawky F. Karas, "The Plight of the Copts in Egypt: Strangers in Their Lands," *Christian Century* 33 (5 Oct. 1974): 916-7.

<sup>5</sup> "The Coptic Church," *Diakonia* 8 (1973): 122 .

be followed by the declaration of Christ's one people communicant in the same saving mysteries.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, when Patriarch Shenouda III visited Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I at Constantinople 15-17 October 1972, Dimitrios could say about this first ever visit, that it was "the first-fruits of new developments and a good augury for our future relations,"<sup>7</sup> and that "the Church of Constantinople has always turned towards the venerable Coptic Church as to a Sister Church, sharing a common tradition and deposit of faith."<sup>8</sup> He spoke openly about the hopes for reunion with the Coptic churches, this hope, which he said is shared by all Sister Orthodox Churches.

Dimitrios spoke as if the centuries of misunderstanding between the See of Constantinople and that of Alexandria had never happened, affirming that between the two Churches, "wholesome mutual respect has never been lacking," and emphasizing the common Orthodox and Coptic heritage of monasticism and asceticism.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note, especially in light of the political turmoil in which Shenouda's church lives, this statement of Dimitrios, "the schism for the Copts represented a question of national freedom and liberation, while the dogmatic issue was reduced to a simple matter of semantics."<sup>10</sup> It would be ironic if the quest for that national freedom and liberation which was a catalyst for the schism were the catalyst for reunion.

It is with this background in mind, that the May 1973 meeting between Pope Paul VI Patriarch Shenouda must be considered.

Note: Patriarch Shenouda's efforts have borne fruit: since these beginnings in the 1970s, progress for reunion between the Coptic and the Orthodox Churches has been

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<sup>6</sup> "Coptic Patriarch Shenouda and the Orthodox Patriarch Agree On Christology," *ibid.*, 385.

<sup>7</sup> *Eastern Churches Review* 5 (Spring, 1973): 86.

<sup>8</sup> "Speech of the Ecumenical Patriarch To The Coptic Patriarch," *Diakonia* 8 (1973): 91-92.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.



rapid. At a meeting of the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Churches (Egypt, Syria, Armenia, India and Ethiopia) on 20-24 June 1989, Pope Shenouda specifically asked the participants to find a way to restore full communion between the two families of churches. Important for our discussion is this remarkable paragraph

Throughout our discussion we have found our common ground in the formula of our common Father, St. Cyril of Alexandria . . . and in his dictum that 'it is sufficient for the confession of our true and irreproachable faith to say and to confess that the Holy Virgin is Theotokos' (Hom. 15; cf. Ep 39).<sup>11</sup>

The Virgin Mary is mentioned four times in this document which covers scarcely three pages.

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<sup>11</sup> See text of final agreement in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990): 78-83. On 23-28 September 1990 the commission met again and produced a "Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches," which contains more precise theological statements and practical recommendations for restoring a formal reunion of these churches (*Sourozh* no. 34:31-37 [Feb. 1991]).

## Detached Note C

### The Union of Brest (1596)

Recent discussions about the situation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church have often neglected to include mention of the Union of Brest in 1596, but begin, rather with the bogus Union of Lvov, forced by Stalin in 1946 upon the Catholics of the Eastern Rite, returning them to the Russian Orthodox Church, and effectively creating a tenacious and faithful catacomb church, which has prevailed. Understanding the Orthodox feeling about the Union of Brest is essential to coming to grips with the current disagreements in the Ukraine, and finding a solution which will be accepted by both sides. There are many and varied opinions about the complicated reasons for the Union and the controversy which has surrounded it to this day.<sup>1</sup>

That agreement, which occurred in extremely complicated circumstances, effected the union of the Orthodox Church with the See of Rome in the area then ruled by the Catholic kings of Poland, creating what is known today as the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

It is easily forgotten that the seeds for this conflict were sown in the fourteenth century, when, following the fall of Kiev to the Tartars in 1237,<sup>2</sup> the kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania were united under a single ruler in 1386. While the monarchs and the majority of the people were Roman Catholic, a significant minority was Russian and

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<sup>1</sup> See Oscar Halecki, *From Florence To Brest (1439-1596)*, 2d ed., (Archon Books, 1968) and Vasyl Markus, "Religion and Nationality: The Uniates of the Ukraine," in *Religion and Atheism in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe*, eds. Bohdan R. Bociurkiw and John W. Strong (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1975).

<sup>2</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 90.

Orthodox.<sup>3</sup> The Orthodox were under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but their bishops were appointed by the Catholic kings of Poland. Some of these Orthodox bishops favored union with Rome, but the Orthodox laity, among them, a number of nobles, formed powerful lay associations (Brotherhoods) which opposed union with Rome.

Bitterness between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox was made worse by Jesuit attempts to convert the Orthodox peasants to Roman obedience.<sup>4</sup> In 1596, a council was called at Brest to proclaim the union with Rome. Six of the Orthodox bishops, including the Metropolitan of Kiev, Michael Ragoza, favored the move. It was opposed by the two remaining Orthodox bishops, a large number of delegates from the monasteries and the parish clergy, and the majority of the faithful.<sup>5</sup> The resulting mutual anathemas and excommunications saw the beginning of the “Catholics of the Eastern Rite.”<sup>6</sup>

The legacy of the Union of Brest has been a bitter one, seeing violence and duplicity on both sides. Based on the decrees of the Council of Florence, the union required the Orthodox who joined Rome to recognize the jurisdiction of the Pope, but they were allowed to retain their Slavonic Liturgy and such traditionally Orthodox practices as married clergy. Outwardly, the Eastern Rite Catholics appeared no different from the Orthodox they had been. It has been said that the uneducated Orthodox peasants explained the union “by saying that the Pope had now joined the Orthodox Church.”<sup>7</sup>

The expectations held by both sides for progress toward union between Rome and Moscow were not realized. There was strenuous opposition to the Union on the part

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>4</sup> Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher, and Robert Lee Wolff, *Modern Civilization* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1958), 22.

<sup>5</sup> John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, 3d ed., rev., (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981), 112.

<sup>6</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 104.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 105.

of some of the nobles, the populace and the secular clergy and the monks. A tragic symbol of this conflict is the Eastern Rite Catholic Archbishop Josaphat Kuncewicz, murdered by the Orthodox following his formidable efforts to compel them to accept union with Rome.<sup>8</sup> This is the St. Josaphat referred to by Pope John Paul in his letter to the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

It is generally agreed by both Roman Catholic and Orthodox scholars that the impulse for the Union contained both political and religious motives. Some Catholic sources stress the desire of the Polish government to strengthen itself against the growing power of the Orthodox Patriarchate and Russian political and religious institutions and traditions. The efforts of the majority of the Orthodox hierarchy and some of the nobility to reform and revive the Orthodox Church made union with Rome appealing.<sup>9</sup> Orthodox sources, on the other hand, frequently emphasize the role played by the annexation in 1569 of Kiev and part of the Ukraine to Poland. This redrawing of national boundaries placed a significant number of Orthodox under a strongly Catholic government. Coinciding with the arrival of Jesuits, who were invited to Poland to combat the growing influence of Calvinism, the Orthodox were also subjected to pressure to join with Rome. The excellent Jesuit schools were available only to the children of the Catholic nobility, and seats in the Senate open also only to the Catholic nobility. The promise that both of these privileges would follow an agreement with Rome served as a catalyst for the secret negotiations which culminated in the Union of Brest.<sup>10</sup>

The consequences of the Union of Brest remain. According to Florovsky, “the *Unia* was fundamentally a clerical movement, the work of a few bishops, separated and

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<sup>8</sup> W. F. Reddaway, et. al, eds., *The Cambridge History of Poland*, vol. 2, (New York: Octagon books, 1971), 562.

<sup>9</sup> See NCE, vol. 2, 787-88, “Brest, Union of,” by F. J. Ladowicz, and Thomas F. Sable, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. “Uniate Churches.”

<sup>10</sup> See Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, 111-13, Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 103-105, and Nicholas Zernov, *Eastern Christendom: A Study of the Origin and Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), 146-48.

isolated from the community of the Church, who acted without its free and conciliar consent . . . without the knowledge of the Christian people.”<sup>11</sup>

His characterization of the seriousness of the consequences of the Union of Brest are strangely appropriate for the situation in the Ukraine at the time of John Paul II’s letter: “The *Unia* in Poland not only ruptured the Eastern Church, it also severed the Roman Catholic community. By creating a second holy body under papal authority, it originated a duality within the western Church.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1839, following the partition of Poland, a large number of Eastern Rite Catholics returned to the Orthodox Church, though the majority remained faithful to Rome until 1946, when they were forced by Stalin to join the Russian Orthodox Church “under conditions rather similar to if not worse than those under which it was formerly united with Rome.”<sup>13</sup> According to Dimitry Pospelovsky, Stalin “reunited” the Eastern Rite Catholic Church with the Moscow Patriarchate for three reasons, all political: to suppress Ukrainian nationalism and separatism, to crush anti-Soviet resistance led by the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and to destroy a group whose allegiance to the Vatican placed them in a jurisdiction which he could not control.<sup>14</sup>

The Ukrainian Catholic Church, to whom Pope John Paul II addresses his 14 February 1988 message, is a tragic result of Stalin’s actions in 1946.

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<sup>11</sup> Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Part I. vol. 5 in the *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, ed. Richard S. Haugh, trans. Robert L. Nichols (Belmont Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979), 52.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>13</sup> Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church*, 113.

<sup>14</sup> Pospelovsky, 306-309.

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