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Marian Mariology

Chapter 13



The veneration of Mary, when properly understood, permeates the entire life of the Church; it is a dimension of dogma and of piety, of Christology and of ecclesiology. This dimension needs to be made explicit today in connection with the problems of humanity. Mariology expresses something fundamental to the Christian life itself, to the Christian experience of the world.

Sound Mariology has always been understood in Christological terms. If the Gospel revealed nothing more than the fact that Jesus Christ, God and man, was born of Mary, this alone would be sufficient for the Church to love her and to draw theological conclusions from pondering this relationship of Mother and Son. We need no other revelations. Mary is a self-evident and essential *datum* and dimension of the Gospel.

Chapter one centers on Catechesis flowing from Byzantine Marian spirituality with commentary by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M. Chapter 2 discusses Mariology today with commentary by Rev. Professor Michael Lapierre, S.J. The remaining chapters are commentaries on various Marian topics by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. (1914– 2000).

Chapter 13

Devotion of the Blessed Virgin Today

by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

There is no subject in Catholic devotion more extensive than the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is only to be expected, since the Mother of God is so basic to a correct understanding of her Divine Son.

With the break in Catholic unity which took place in the sixteenth century, the Western world was deeply affected by those who considered themselves Christians, but had reservations about the Mother of Christ.

It is not commonly known that faith in her Divine Son is logically dependent on faith in His mother as the Mother of God.

This has deeply affected the Western world, which has been so deeply infected by what I may call “non-Catholic Christianity.” After all, it is one thing to believe in Jesus Christ. It is something else to believe that He is the Living God who became man as a child conceived by a human mother. Already in the earliest centuries of Christianity, faith in the real Jesus Christ meant faith also in His Mother as the mother of a human child, indeed, but also, and emphatically, the Mother of God.

This truth is essential to Catholic piety. We are only as truly devoted to Jesus Christ as

we believe that He had a human mother, but she is the Mother of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

In some ways, this is one of the most important truths of our Catholic faith. We believe that the Son of Mary is the Son of the Eternal God. Christ was only one person. But Jesus had two natures. He was the Eternal Son of God, who had always been the Son of the Eternal Father. But He also became the Son of Mary when she conceived Him at Nazareth as the God-man. The moment Mary said, “Be it done to me according to thy word,” the Eternal God became a human being who was conceived in time and who will continue as the God-man for all eternity.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of seeing Mary as the true mother of Jesus Christ, who existed from all eternity, but became man at the moment of His Incarnation in the womb of Mary.

This is the heart of our Catholic faith. We believe the same Jesus Christ who always existed as God began to exist as man the moment His mother accepted the invitation to become the Mother of the Most High.

Our study of the following articles on Mary are not merely reflections in theology. They are also so many professions of faith in Mary’s Son as the Son of the Everlasting Father.

How this needs to be emphasized today. Certainly Jesus Christ began to exist as man the moment His Mother accepted the invitation of her divine maternity. But He existed eternally before the beginning of time as the Living Son of the Everlasting Father.

How this needs to be stressed today! Jesus Christ is no less than the Living God who never began, who always was as the Everlasting Son of the Eternal Father. Jesus Christ is truly man. He shares our human nature, our human mind and body, our human life and mortality. But He is the Everlasting God who never came into existence and who always was and will be forever more.

This is the underlying theme of the reflections which follow (articles on Mary). The Eternal God who never came into existence but always was, out of love for us, became man so that we might become more and more like Him, who is the Timeless Deity without beginning.

It was the Blessed Virgin Mary who was chosen by God to change the meaning of creation. She became the Mother of the Timeless God and the model for all of us to imitate in her deep faith of believing that our destiny is to join her in the timeless eternity which she now enjoys.

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