



Marian Doctrine and Devotion

Chapter 6



Marian devotions are those prayers and acts undertaken to honor Mary and with the intent of seeking her intercession with her Son, Jesus, and his Father. Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not, however, amount to worship - which is reserved for God alone. Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed a three-level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* that applies to God, the Virgin Mary and then to the other saints.

The Roman Catholic Church holds many teachings associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Four of these specific doctrines have been raised to the level of dogma, meaning in technical terms that they must be held by the faithful as essential to participation as Roman Catholics. The four Marian dogmas have been defined by the magisterium over the course of Christian history, using both Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the two elements of the one source of Revelation, as evidence for these proclamations. These four dogmas are: Mary the Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity of Mary, The Immaculate Conception, and The Assumption of Mary into Heaven. The twentieth-century has seen a significant drive to establish a fifth and final Dogma-Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

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Chapter 6

The Eternal Plan begins to be realized:

a) The historicity of the Infancy Gospels (Mt 1-2 and Lk 1-2):

Vatican II LG §57: "This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is evident from the time of the virginal conception of Christ even to His death. In the first place, it is evident when Mary, arising in haste to visit Elizabeth, is greeted by her as blessed because of her faith... [it is evident] at His birth, when the Mother of God joyfully showed her firstborn Son—who did not diminish, but consecrated her virginal integrity—to the shepherds and the Magi." A bit earlier, in §55, the same document had shown great meticulousness in inserting *cf.* before references to Gen 3. 15 and Is 7. 14, to avoid saying flatly that the human author of these verses had seen what the Church now sees in them. But no such reservations were made in the lines just cited from §57, even as to the shepherds and the Magi. We notice too that *Lumen Gentium* (LG) speaks of her "virginal integrity", which surely refers to physical virginity. So her virginity is not just something spiritual as some are claiming.

exterior would be worthless (cf. Isaiah 29:13). His interior disposition was one of obedience. She shared in that obedience too, willing then what the Father willed, at the cost of going greatly contrary to her immense love (more on this later).

3) Since she totally dedicated herself to the person and work of her Son, she could not have been ignorant of what was going on. We saw evidence of her knowledge earlier in connection with the Targums.

4) We see how unfortunate was the comment of R. Laurentin in *Les Evangiles de l'Enfance du Christ*, (Tournay, 1982, p. 34) that at the annunciation, she "opposed her human will to the divine will." (The same book several times calls Jesus disobedient, and denies that "full of grace" is the correct translation.)

5) LG 56 cited above said that the Father willed that her consent be given before the incarnation. Leo XIII, *Fidentem piumque*, Sept 20, 1896. ASS 29. 206: "To humans, who were rushing to eternal ruin, by her admirable consent 'in the name of the whole human race' she brought the Savior already when she received the message of the peace-bringing sacrament which was brought to earth by the angel." The internal quote is from St. Thomas, *Summa III*. 30. 1. Similarly, Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS 35. 247, citing ST 3. 30. 1: "... and she consented 'in the name of the whole human race,' so that 'a sort of spiritual marriage exists between the Son of God and human nature.'"

End

called Son of God. But that would be a unique reason. So it at least pointed to His divinity. Along with this would go all the messianic prophecy texts we have already seen pointing to the divinity of the Messiah.—Pope St. Leo the Great, in the middle of the 5th century, in a homily on the nativity said: "The royal virgin of the line of David is chosen who, since she was to be made pregnant with the Sacred Offspring, first conceived the divine and human Child in her mind, before doing so in her body. And so that she would not be struck with unusual emotions, in ignorance of the heavenly plan, she learned what was to be done in her by the Holy Spirit from the conversation with the angel." Pope Leo XIII (*Parta humano generi*, Sept 8, 1901) wrote: "O how sweet, how pleasing did the greeting of the angel come to the Blessed Virgin, who then, when Gabriel greeted her, sensed that she had conceived the Word of God by the Holy Spirit." Pope Paul VI speaks of her on this occasion as "taken into dialogue with God" (*Marialis cultus*, AAS 66. 148).

Vatican II, LG §56: "The Father of mercies willed that the acceptance by the planned-for Mother should come before the Incarnation, so that thus, just as a woman contributed to death, so also a woman should contribute to life... . And so Mary, the daughter of Adam, by consenting to the divine word, became the Mother of Jesus, and embracing the salvific will of God with full heart, held back by no sin, totally dedicated herself as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, by the grace of Almighty God, serving the mystery of the Redemption with Him and under Him. Rightly then do the Holy Fathers judge that Mary was not merely passively employed by God, but was cooperating in free faith and obedience in human salvation. For she, as St. Irenaeus said, 'by obeying became a cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race. 'Hence not a few ancient Fathers gladly agree with him [S. Irenaeus] in their preaching: 'the knot of the disobedience of Eve was loosed by the obedience of Mary.'"

Comments: 1) We note the New Eve theme, especially in the quote from St. Irenaeus. Remarkably, the comparison of the knot objectively refers to Calvary, to cooperation there, for the knot was not untied until then. Yet St. Irenaeus, if we read his context, seems to have had in mind the day of the annunciation. However, he, a Father of the Church, was an instrument in the hands of Providence and so could write more than he himself understood—we think of the comments of Vatican II on Gen 3. 15 and Is 7. 14, where although it is not certain that the original human writers saw all the import, yet the council said the Church later did see it. Similarly, Jeremiah in 31. 31 ff., the prophecy of the new covenant, as we remarked earlier, may not have seen the full import of his own words, that the essential obedience of the new covenant would be that of Christ.

2) We note the stress on obedience. Obedience was the covenant condition at Sinai, and it was to be the covenant condition in the new covenant as well. Cf. LG 3: "... by His obedience He brought about redemption." We recall and compare too Romans 5. 19. The Council will return to the theme of obedience in LG 61: "she cooperated in the work of the Savior ... by obedience..." Further Calvary was a sacrifice. In a sacrifice we find exterior sign and interior dispositions. Without the interior the

Paul VI, Allocution of Dec 18, 1966 (*Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*). He complained that some "try to diminish the historical value of the Gospels themselves, especially those that refer to the birth of Jesus and His infancy. We mention this devaluation briefly so that you may know how to defend with study and faith the consoling certainty that these pages are not inventions of people's fancy, but that they speak the truth... . The authority of the Council has not pronounced differently on this: 'The Sacred Authors wrote... always in such a way that they reported on Jesus with sincerity and truth' (Constitution on Divine Revelation n. 19)."

John Paul II, General Audience of January 28, 1988: "To identify the source of the infancy narrative one must go back to St. Luke's remark: 'Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart'... Mary 'who kept these things in her heart'... could bear witness, after Christ's death and resurrection, in regard to what concerned herself and her role as Mother, precisely in the apostolic period when the New Testament texts were being written, and when the early Christian tradition had its origin."

John L. McKenzie on charges by R. Brown's *The Birth of the Messiah* (Doubleday, 1977). Brown claimed St. Luke built up a few scant bits of information in parallel to OT incidents. John L. McKenzie, hardly a conservative, wrote a review of Brown's book in *National Catholic Reporter*, Dec. 2, 1977: "... one wonders how a Gentile convert (or a Gentile proselyte) could have acquired so quickly the mastery of the Greek Old Testament shown in the use of the Old Testament in Luke's infancy narratives. If Luke the physician had been able to study medicine with such success, he would have discovered a cure for cancer... . Luke must have had a source for his Old Testament texts and allusions; and it is hard to think of such a collection of texts without a narrative for them to illustrate, a pre-Lucan infancy narrative is suggested, I beg to submit."

Journal for Study of the New Testament, vol. 15 (July 1982) pp. 30-41, article "Did St. Luke Imitate the Septuagint?" by Wm. G. Most. A study of Luke's use of apodotic kai shows Luke was meticulous in his translation of Hebrew documents at certain points. Luke had said in his opening lines that he used documents. This is a confirmation. Right after showing such care for precision, could we imagine Luke indulging in fancies?

Answers to objections against the infancy Gospels:

a) In Matthew, Mary and Joseph live in a house; in Luke, they are in a stable.—Reply: St. Joseph would find better lodgings as soon as possible. Matthew reports a later time, when the Magi came. The fact that Herod killed all babies up to 2 years of age shows there was quite a bit of time, even if we allow for the probability Herod played it safe.

b) A journey to Egypt will not fit with Luke's account of an orderly return to Nazareth. —Reply: Luke merely gives a compendium of events. Since the Magi came some time after the birth of Jesus, there was time for the presentation in the temple, and for the Magi's visit after that, then the flight into Egypt. For Luke to omit events after the presentation can be an example of telescoping or compendious writing, a phenomenon whose possibility is admitted by all. For example, in Acts 15 we have the account of the Council of Jerusalem in 49 AD, which decided gentile converts did not need to keep the Mosaic law and be circumcised. But the council also added four requests, to appease the Jews. First, avoid loose sex—but that is part of basic morality; second, avoid what is strangled; three, avoid drinking blood; and four, avoid food sacrificed to idols. Yet Paul in 1 Cor 8 ff. said they could eat such food sacrificed to idols, provided only that there was no scandal. Hence many have said: Paul seems not to have known the decision of the Council of Jerusalem, and so probably there were two councils, and Paul knew only one. Hence telescoping is readily admitted. The solution is so easy without telescoping: the letter was addressed not to the whole church, but only to the gentiles of Syria and Cilicia. When Paul worked in that area he did preach all those things (cf. Acts 16:4). But in Corinth there was no need, the requests did not apply there.

c) There is no record of such a census, or of Quirinius being governor at the time. —Reply: A recent study, E. L. Martin, *The Star that Astonished the World* (ASK Publications, Portland, Or. 25000, 1991) shows that Jesus was born in 3 B. C. . probably in the fall. The time hinges on one thing, the fact that Josephus puts the death of Herod just after a lunar eclipse. Martin shows we must pick the eclipse of Jan. 10, 1 B. C. because all the events that Josephus says took place between Herod's death and the next Passover would take about 12 weeks. The only other eclipse that gave enough time would be that of Sept 15, 5 BC. But since Herod then was very sick, and in Jericho at the time of the eclipse, he would not have stayed in Jericho—extremely hot at that season, while Jerusalem would have been comfortable. But Jan 10 would be comfortable in Jericho. Further, there are secular sources that show there was an enrollment in 3 B. C. to take an oath of allegiance to Augustus (cf. Lewis & Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, Source Books II, pp. 34-35 , since in 2 B. C. he was to receive the great title of Father of His Country.

The real governor of Palestine would have gone to Rome for the great celebration. He needed someone to take care of the country in his absence. Since Augustus got the honor on Feb. 5, 2 BC, the governor would have to leave before Nov 1 of 3 BC—Mediterranean was dangerous for sailing after Nov 1. But Quirinius had just completed a successful war to the north, in Cilicia, against the Homonadenses. So he could be an ideal man to put in charge. Luke does not use the noun governor, but a verbal form, governing. Still further, there has been an obscure decade 6 B. C. to 4 A. D. whose events were hard to fit in if we took the birth of Christ to have been in the range 4 to 6 B. C. But with the new dating all these fall into place easily. E. g. Augustus in 1 AD received his 15th acclamation for a victory in 1 AD. If we picked 4 BC for birth of Christ, we cannot find such a victory, but if the birth of Christ is 3 BC, then the war would be running at about the right time and finished in 1 AD.

Martin's work has received fine reviews from astronomers (his work is based on astronomy, and over 600 planetariums have modified their Christmas star show to fit with his findings) and from Classicists, who were concerned about the obscure decade.

Objection: a) Josephus says Herod had a reign of 37 years after being proclaimed king by the Romans, and had 34 yrs. After the death of Antigonos, which came soon after Herod took Jerusalem. b) Further, his 3 successors, Archelaus, Antipas and Philip started to reign in 4 BC. So Herod died in 4 BC.

Reply: a) That calculation would make the death of Herod fall actually in 3 BC—scholars have had to stretch the date, since there was no eclipse of the moon in 3 BC.—But, Herod took Jerusalem late in 36 BC (on Yom Kippur in a sabbatical year, so it was well remembered—and Josephus says Pompey had taken Jerusalem in 63 which was 27 yrs. to the day of Herod's capture of Jerusalem). Using the common accession year dating, we see Herod started his 34 years on Nisan 1 in 35 BC, and those years would end on Nisan 1, 1 BC. So 34 years after 35 BC yields 1 BC for death of Herod after eclipse of Jan 10.—b) As to the 3 successors, Herod lost favor of Augustus in 4 BC, on a false report, was no longer "Friend of Caesar", but "Subject". Antedating of reigns was common—reason here was to make the three seem to connect with the two "royal" sons, of Hasmonean descent, Alexander and Aristobulus, whom Herod executed on false reports from Antipater (do not confuse with Antipas).

b) The Annunciation:

Text of St. Luke: (Above, on p. 19, we explained the greeting,": Full of grace"): Lk 1. 32: The angel says her Son will be "son of the most High". This would not tell her much, for any devout Jew could be called a son of God. In Hosea 11. 1 "Out of Egypt I have called my son," the son is the whole people of Israel.—But then in 1. 32: "The Lord God will give Him the throne of David His father, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will be without end."—Most Jews at the time believed the Messiah, and no one else, would reign forever. So she would easily see that her Son was to be the Messiah. This then would open up for her all the Old Testament prophecies on the Messiah, with or without the help of the Targums we have already seen. She probably saw these things almost at once, or at least, when she pondered all these things in her heart.—Luke 1. 35: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you. And therefore also the Holy One to be born of you shall be called the Son of God." That word overshadow would be very telling. It was the term used for the Divine Presence filling the tabernacle in the desert (Exodus 40. 34-35—compare also the cloud filling the newly consecrated temple in Jerusalem in 1 Kings 8. 10). So, precisely because the Divine Presence would fill her, therefore, for that reason, He would be