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Marian Mariology

Chapter 20



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 20

Mary, The Mother of God

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

In 1970, Pope Paul VI instituted January 1 as the feast of Mary, Mother of God. This was to replace the feast of Our Lord's Circumcision, and place the Latin Rite in accord with the Eastern tradition of the Catholic Church. It would also supplant the former feast of the Maternity of Mary on October 11.

The Holy Father gave five reasons for instituting the new feast. Each reason tells us what we believe when we profess our faith in Mary's Divine Maternity, and how this mystery should affect our daily lives.

Mary's role in the Mystery of Salvation. She was chosen from all eternity to become the Mother of God. She was prepared for this by her Immaculate Conception. The body of whom the Son of God would take His flesh had to be absolutely free from any stain of sin from the first moment of her existence.

Mary was invited by the angel at the Annunciation to become the Mother of the Most High. She gave her *fiat* on which depended the future redemption of the human race. In order to reassure her that she would conceive without human intercourse, the angel told Mary that her kinswoman, who was sterile, had conceived a son in her old age. Soon after, at Mary's visitation, Elizabeth exclaimed in grateful appreciation, "How have I deserved that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43).

The moment Mary's words were heard by Elizabeth, John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb. Why? Because the child in Mary's womb at her greeting was the all-holy God.

Through Mary We Received the Author of Life. It is not rhetoric but reality, that the Son of Mary is twice over the Author of life. He is the origin of human life as its Creator, since "All things were made through Him, and without Him was made nothing that has been made" (John 1:3).

But Mary's Son is also the Author of our supernatural life. Except for His conception and birth of Mary, the human race would not have been redeemed from sin. This means that Christ is the Origin of our life of grace, by which sin is removed and we are restored to the divine life that was lost through our first parents. Mary is therefore the second Eve, who by her obedience in becoming the Mother of God gave us the Second Adam who expiated the sin of the first Adam and Eve.

Adoration of Mary's Son, the Newborn Prince of Peace. The first commandment of the Decalogue prescribes the worship of the one true God. We believe that the Child whom Mary brought into the world is God Incarnate. That is why during His public ministry, Jesus did not hesitate to say that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). That is also why the doubting Thomas, once converted, professed his faith in Jesus' Divinity by addressing Him, "My Lord and My God" (John 20:28). That is finally why, at the elevation of the Mass, we repeat Thomas' words. Why? Because after consecration, on the altar is Mary's Divine Son, in the flesh and blood He received from His Mother.

It is not a casual afterthought, to think of Christ as Prince (or Source) of Peace. The experience of God's friendship is our deepest source of peace. But except for the mercy of Mary's Son, we would not be reconciled with God and so could not know the peace of soul that only a forgiven sinner can have.

Meditate on the Angel's Message at Bethlehem. How did Pope Paul VI associate Mary with the good news of great joy announced by the angel on Christmas morning? He explained that Mary is both the cause and the model of our joy because she is the Mother of God.

She is the cause of our joy because she gave us Jesus Christ. He is at once the God who alone can eternally satisfy the desires of our heart and the God-man whose death assures us of happiness already on earth - provided we "draw waters with joy out of the Savior's fountains" (Isaiah 12:3), which are the sacraments He instituted.

Mary is also the model of our joy. In her Magnificat, she declared “my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:47). That must also be our norm for rejoicing: not in ourselves, not in doing our own will, but in God and doing His will.

In the last analysis, that is why we have a free will, to please the One who gave us a free will. When Jesus told us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” He was giving us the secret of true joy. Like Mary, we can have a foretaste of heaven already on earth, in the measure that we conform our wills to the divine will - even as the beatitude of the saints in heaven is the fruit of their perfect conformity to the will of God.

Implore Mary for Peace in the World. The closing purpose for instituting the feast of Mary, Mother of God, touches on the heart of the Divine Maternity.

We are living in the most homicidal century in human history. The death casualties in the wars since 1900 are greater than in all the previous centuries put together since the origin of man.

There must be some radical cause. There is. As a once Christian people become de-Christianized, the inevitable happens. Grace is withdrawn and a deep sense of guilt pervades whole nations. They become a prey to violence, like the mass murder of millions of unborn children; or the genocide of two world wars.

If peace within nations and peace between nations is to be restored, they must be reconverted to the Christ whom they had abandoned. To do this, they must be re-convinced that God became man, and was born of the Virgin Mary in order to deliver man from the slavery of sin.

There is more here than meets the eye, and far more than what can be said in this short article on Mary, the Mother of God.

When Mohammed founded Islam in the early seventh century, he wanted to convert his people from polytheism to belief in only one God. To this end, he wrote the Koran, which relied heavily on the remnants of Christianity still left in pre-Islamic Arabia after the plague of Nestorianism, which denied that Mary is the Mother of God. A fair description of Mohammedanism is to call it Nestorian Christianity which denies Mary’s Divine Maternity, and condemns Christians as idolaters who dare to claim that Isa (Jesus), the Ibn Maryam (Son of Mary), is Ibn Allah (Son of God).

The future peace of the world, Pope Paul VI would say, depends on a strong faith in Mary’s intercession with her Son, who is God.

Those who have lost this faith must recover it. Those who never had this faith must be given it. There is no other option.

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