



Mary: Mother Of All Nations

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Perhaps the time has finally come for it [the Catholic Church] to lay stress on Mary's poverty, humility, and service in relation to Christ. Not of course to diminish her grandeur, but to show that her greatness in the eyes of God consists not so much in a royalty and power conceived in a human fashion, but rather in the poverty of humble folk who are totally dedicated to the service of God. . . . Hers is the greatness of the blessed one, full of grace, seen in the poverty of the servant of the Lord.—Max Thurian.

This is the "other side" of Mary which has always been taught by the Church but not stressed until recently. Both aspects depend upon her one, great prerogative as the "Mother of God," *Theotokos*, defined at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in the year 431. With this title Mary received explicit mention in the Church's liturgy as the "Mother of Our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Her status of motherhood in relation to the Son of God, determined as a unique privilege by the pure grace of her Creator, is the starting-point for understanding her whole vocation and history. It is the basis of her prerogatives, and because of it Our Lady prophesied "all generations shall call me blessed," not so much because of her actions, but "because He that is mighty has done great things to me" (Lk. 1:48).

Because she is blessed—favored of God—all Christians owe Mary a special devotion as first among the redeemed in their communion in Christ. We shall here investigate some of the reasons for this.

“Marian cult as it has always existed is singular and differs essentially from the worship, in adoration, offered to the Incarnate Word as well as to the Father and Holy Spirit. Marian devotion is most favorable to it” (*Const. on the Church*, #66). These words set the limits in any discussion of Marian devotion. Devotion to the Mother of God in no way adds to or subtracts from the uniqueness of Christ’s role as sole Mediator. Various statements about our redemption by Christ as the new Adam, together with Mary as the new Eve, found in all of traditional Church teaching, are based on the fact that Mary’s co-operation in salvation is regarded as an active *spiritual* and *physical* reception of Christ, the Savior. Mary is not an additional principle in some way making up for a deficiency in Christ’s redemption of mankind. She is part of our redemption, as a way to it, by her motherhood.

Mary as the Old Testament’s “Faithful Remnant”

Mary’s motherhood must first be viewed in the light of Old Testament prophecies. Sophonias’ *Daughter of Sion*, personifying the people of God, is identified with Mary whom Saint Luke, in his Marian Gospel (1:26-2:52), sees as the incarnation of the faithful remnant of Israel. This remnant was waiting, in its poverty and holiness, for the joyous coming of God and His Messiah. Our Lady, the daughter of Sion, is the mother of the Messiah. Following her virginal conception, the Lord dwelt in her womb. Mary became the new Ark of the Covenant. The Messiah himself was identified in the prophetic books, especially Isaiah, with the “Suffering Servant of God” and the “Poor One of Yahweh.” These messianic titles were first personified in Israel, the *holy Remnant*. Mary’s attitude as seen in her reaction to the message of the angel and in her *Magnificat* was permeated with this spirit of poverty and “lowliness of His handmaid.” The true Israelite concept of religion, based on this notion of the *anawin* (poor), expressing an utter trust in God the Helper and Redeemer characterized Mary’s spiritual attitude.

Mary’s “behold the handmaid of the Lord” expressed a living act of faith to God’s decree as made known by His messenger, Gabriel. Since Christ is the *Servant of Yahweh*, then, in union with Him, Mary is His handmaid of her Lord. In this she reveals her complete humility and poverty before God, her pure receptivity, and her de-

sire to conceive His Messiah. These were qualities indicative of Israel's remnant after the Babylonian captivity.

Daughter of Sion, Mother of the Messiah, Handmaid of the Lord, and "her in whom God dwells," are a few of the titles applied to Our Lady when seen in the context of the Old Testament.

Basic Marian Titles in Motherhood

Full of Grace—In the New Testament the first name Mary is given is the title, *Full of Grace*, which is based on her love of God. Christ is the primary object of this fullness of grace—this perfect love of the Father—which He can bestow on those who love and dwell in Him as members of His Body. Every Christian shares in this fullness since Christ was given for all. But Mary received it as a title, in God's predestined plan, by reason of her vocation as Mother of the Messiah. She is a sure and living sign of this fullness of grace, the origin of which is in Christ Himself. Mary overflowed with this fullness of grace, which was in the Beloved, even before becoming the Mother of the Beloved. By God's totally free and unsolicited election Mary was chosen to become God's holy tabernacle as the Mother of Grace at the Incarnation.

Full of grace, Our Lady has a special place among the saints. This was admitted even by the sixteenth century reformers who claimed that Christ came to remove men's sins and make them holy. Calvin taught that Christ Himself must be holy and for this purpose God sanctified His mother because it was fitting that the Holy Son of God should likewise have a holy mother. At the Reformation, Marian doctrine was considered part of free theological opinion so that orthodox Christology would not be compromised by this or that opinion. Much anti-Marian polemic developed later as a result of many Protestant sect's denial of Christ's divinity. It ran parallel with the development of Roman Catholic Marian dogma, which taught that Mary is full of grace and holy because she is seen as such by faith, and it is the faith, and only the faith, that tells us that Christ is divine. As far as the Gospel is concerned, Mary does not exist outside her vocation and function as the Mother of the Lord, and in respect to this fact, Mary is called Full of Grace.

It is interesting to note that whatever the theological position which Christians hold today in regard to the Immaculate Conception and

Assumption of the Mother of Christ, these two Catholic doctrines were accepted by the majority of the reformers (Calvin excluded) in the form that was current in their day. Calvin toned down Marian discussion in order to play up Christ's unique place in history. In their present dogmatic form in the Catholic Church the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary are late nineteenth and middle twentieth century definitions respectively, although they were ancient Catholic belief. The reformers considered Mary's conception to be placed between that of Christ and that of all other men. Most theologians of the day, including Roman Catholic, taught that Mary was within the scope of original sin, but her soul escaped this. At the moment her soul was infused into her body she was purified from original sin and, at the first instant she began to live, she was without sin and remained so. This was Luther's teaching on Our Lady's conception. Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli, and many others, held definitely that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven by the angels.¹

Virginity: The Sign of Mary's Complete Involvement—Closely allied to and yet distinct from Our Lady's title of *Full of Grace* is her attitude of spiritual virginity, which is not for herself alone, but so that she might involve herself in the salvation of all men. The title of *Virgin* given her by Saint Luke establishes Mary as one set apart. Chosen by God in a special way, Mary had a particular vocation and a unique task. As a virgin she entered into a distinctive relationship with God in order to embrace His plan for His Incarnation. Mary's virginity indicates her exceptional intimacy with God. At the Annunciation her state of virginity was perpetuated. The divine communication was for Our Lady what the burning bush was for Moses. Mary then realized that the God of Israel had chosen to enter into a relationship with her such as had never existed before. The Word of God became the Anointed Savior in Jesus, her Son, and Mary's virginity is the sign of this miraculous, exceptional relationship. Her fulness of grace produced a unique sanctity in her and put her in so great a relationship with God, filled her life so utterly, that no one else could take His place in her life.

¹ Max Thurian, *Mary, Mother of All Christians*. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964, ch. 6.)

Thus Mary's virgin state gained a new meaning after the Message. She was consecrated a virgin in motherhood, a virgin motherhood undertaken for all men. It is here that Mary foreshadows the Church as God's new creation:

She was a mother and virgin, a virgin-mother. She prolonged the heavenly gift of her virgin motherhood into a state of celibacy which she fully took upon herself. Her single purpose as a mother was to belong exclusively to the Redeemer. So that her virgin state embraced "for the sake of the Kingdom of God" gave her motherhood an apostolic significance. . . . Her virgin motherhood is therefore essentially a religious and apostolic event. The virgin state of her divine motherhood, viewed as an aspect of this motherhood, seems to emphasize the fact that she became the mother of Christ precisely for the benefit of all men.²

Mary, by her complete involvement with God in Christ, becomes, likewise, completely involved with each one of us as Christ's brothers in His Church.

Mother of Jesus: Mary's Complete Historical Title—*Mary, the Mother of Jesus* is the bare scriptural fact having the greatest impact in Marian devotional titles today. It encompasses the entire dogma of Mary because it is the title "Mother of God" expressed in concrete reality. Jesus is above all else *the Redeemer* who carries on his action of redemption in His Mystical Body, the Church, in which Mary is the first Christian, its prototype, the mother within the Mother Church, the Mother in the order of grace. All other definitions or descriptions of Our Lady as used by the faithful merely serve to develop in greater detail what is contained in this infinitely rich concrete motherhood of Jesus:

. . . Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the *mother of Jesus*, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under him and with him, by the grace of Almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption . . . the holy Fathers see her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." [*Const. on the Church*, # 56]. (Italics mine)

² Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*. (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), pp. 82-83.

God was with Mary. This was her grace which was accompanied by her commission to be with the Lord. This commission she fulfilled in a sublime manner when she conceived Christ. It was not simply a question of Christ coming to her, but she also went to Him, for whom she, the *daughter of Sion*, had been waiting for so long. Her conception was an active assent to her own redemption; her motherhood *was* her redemption.

Father Edward Schillebeeckx, quoted above, shows the Virgin Mary's redemption to be consonant with the redemption of all sons of Adam, for she, like us, is a redeemed human being. In stressing the fact that she is redeemed, we are paying her homage because she was redeemed in her conception and reception of Christ in faith. In her physical conception, Mary was objectively redeemed; in her reception in faith, she was subjectively redeemed.

Redemption is an act of the saving God in and through the humanity of Jesus Christ—the God Man—who is objective redemption, i.e., mankind was completely redeemed through Christ's activity as the representative of fallen humanity. Objective redemption is not some reality lying between Christ and ourselves which is completed by another. Christ is redemption. He is grace. Mankind is already redeemed in fact in the acts of the man Jesus, the head of mankind and our *type*. Subjective redemption, however, is the appropriation to ourselves of this already objectively established fact in faith, hope and charity. The state of being redeemed, then, is, in the full sense, both a universally effective, and gratuitous gift of love on the part of the God-Man who alone can sanctify us, and, at the same time, it is a free reception of this gift on the part of each man moved by God's grace. Redemption can never be completely passive. Every man by cooperating with grace is his own "co-redeemer" with regards to his own salvation.

Since Mary was chosen by God to be His mother and preserved by His special grace from all sin, she was conceived and redeemed by way of exemption which she personally accepted in her active bodily conception of Christ and in her active spiritual reception of faith in Jesus and His mission. She thus became a *co-redemptrix* in her own salvation. Her immaculate motherhood did not in any sense include exemption from the normal human processes of development nor from the mystery of salvation. Thus, there were various

climaxes which formed the summit of her subjective or personal acceptance of Christ's redemption—her virginal openness, her *fiat*, her suffering together with Christ in His sacrifice at Calvary, and her renewed acceptance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Her Assumption was the final and perfect sign of her personal redemption by her Son and Lord, for by it, Mary was established as the firstfruit in glory of the Redemption—the model of Christian believers by her faith, and by her obedience to this faith. She is the prototype of the Church in her cooperation and active role in leading Christ's members to His promises.³

The faithful can, then, reasonably claim that Mary is our prototype and model in our positive response to the redemption brought to us by the God-Man, Christ, alone. In this respect Mary's exemplary holiness is one aspect of her function in the plan of salvation. She holds a unique place in the veneration of the saints, second to that of Christ Himself, by reason of her exceedingly great holiness. The greatness of the object of her free acceptance, having Christ who is redemption and grace as her own Son, created a unique depth of faith and readiness for sacrifice which enabled her to remain completely open to every divine possibility including the sacrificial cross of her Son. Her faithful acceptance of the Messiah-Redeemer was explicit at the Annunciation. It implicitly included all conditions which God would subsequently impose on the life of the Messiah. Our Lady learned of these conditions, and accepted them consciously step by step in the course of her Son's life. This basic virginal openness, explicitly present in her acceptance of the motherhood of Christ, and her consequent motherhood of all men, implied in her motherhood of Christ, means that she was psychologically oriented to complete consent to the sacrifice of the cross. Therefore, she became the spiritual mother of the human race as redeemed even at the time of the Annunciation. What began then, as Mary consented to virgin motherhood of the Redeemer, the representative of the entire human race, was realized at Calvary as she became our spiritual mother in her sacrificial love.

The *fiat* to become the mother of Christ formed the basis of Our Lady's freely accepted spiritual motherhood of men. She became

³ Cf. Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 ff.

the mother of the vocation of all men. This is based on the unity of the whole of the human race which is a unity of a community of persons. All these persons have one and the same vocation, namely: they are called to live in and with God through Christ who regained this vocation for them after Adam lost it. As the mother of Christ, who tangibly and visibly embodies this vocation of all men, Mary is also the mother of this personal community of human beings in the realization of their life-destiny. Because of this essential significance of her concrete motherhood, Mary is the mother of the redeemed.

From scriptural evidence we know that the full measure of Christ's messianic power and the efficacy of his sacrifice of atonement came with the Resurrection and His "constitution in power" (Rom. 1:4). Mary, as the receptive maternal partner in Christ's redemptive activity, shared in His power as Lord by virtue of her assumption into heaven. This was the constitution in power of her motherhood with regards to all men. Her heavenly power is still confined essentially to her maternity and is effective within the mysterious relationship existing between the glorified *Kyrios* and His mother. God's love for mankind as manifested in the Old Testament and finally in the Redeemer has maternal aspects. The maternal qualities of mildness and feminine tenderness are explicated in Mary in a more vivid sense than may be manifested in the Man, Jesus. God chose Mary so that this maternal aspect of His love might be represented in her person. This would seem to be the basic reason why a woman-mother should have a role in the plan of salvation. Mary's role, regarding Jesus and us, is essentially an active maternal function. This role was slowly realized in her maternal communion with Christ, the child, the preacher and healer, the teacher, the crucified, and the glorified. The pentecostal experience acquired for Our Lady a mature awareness of her maternal task within the world of the redeemed and her assumption and consequent physical glorification made her queen as well as mother. *In power* with the glorified Christ, she has an intuitive consciousness of her maternal task. She knows all men intimately in their concrete worries and cares. In heaven she is concerned for every one of them in her feminine tenderness and uses her maternal love on their behalf so that *Christ's kingdom* may be fully realized. Thus, when we refer to Mary as *co-redemprix* or *mediatrix of all graces* or *mother of grace* we mean nothing more

nor less than this: that she is *in power* as the glorified mother of the redemption brought by Christ alone; and who completely identifies herself in maternal love with the redemptive acts of her Son—*our* and *her* Redeemer. In other words within the communion of Saints, the *Mother of Jesus* enjoys the most intimate human communion with the sole Redeemer. Thus all other titles given to Mary are but expressions of this one fundamental reality—the Mother of Jesus—and on the basis of this reality all titles are reduced to this one.

Mary and the Church: Mothers in Faith

“The Church,” Christ’s Mystical Body, “contemplating Mary’s hidden sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father’s will by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother” (*Const. on the Church* #64). Historically speaking, however, the Church was called our Mother by the early Church Fathers even before Mary was given this title. But it was Mary’s motherhood which inspired that of the Church. The holy Virgin, as has been said above, was the concrete realization of Israel’s faith in its deepest purity as the *Daughter of Sion*, the “poor virgin handmaid.” The complete faithfulness of Israel, which was asked for by God, was never fully realized until Mary’s *fiat*. As the “Mother of the new Community of faith” (*Const. on the Church*, #69) Mary underwent paradoxical tests of faith. All members of Christ’s Body were to undergo these same tests. Despite the many apparent contradictions in the life of the “Royal Messiah” (the Jewish conception of the Redeemer), Mary continued to believe in the staggering mystery of her Son. Of course, the greatest special test was the death on the cross of the royal Messiah and the apparent loss of the imperishable kingdom. All hope of rescue seemingly died on Calvary, yet Mary still accepted this. With the crucifixion the Church was born and its embodiment was found in one woman and one man—Mary and the beloved disciple. God demanded a total unconditional surrender on her part and Mary gave it.

In this surrender Mary became the mother of the new people of God ransomed by Christ. She is the first Christian in the Church and at the same time the mother of *Mother Church* by way of her cooperation in charity and through her maternal and unconditional sacrificial faith and hope. It is in this sense that Our Lady is the

sacrament of hope. Thus, what has been fully accomplished in Mary is still in process of growing and becoming in the Church and her members on earth. The *parousia* has already taken place for Mary and for her alone because of her poverty, humility and receptiveness completed in perfect love and service of her Son and Redeemer. Because of Calvary, Mary and the Church are inseparable, and a deeper understanding of one will always shed light on the other. Mary is the eschatological sign of the final victory of Christ and the Church over all the powers of evil. The great sign in heaven of the Book of the Apocalypse is mother Church marching towards the glorious kingdom of the Risen One through the tribulations of this world, symbolized in history, and in particular at the foot of the cross, by Mary, the mother of the Crucified and Risen Lord.

Marian Devotion Concretely Expressed

“All generations shall call me blessed” establishes and legitimizes the presence of the Mother of the Lord in the liturgy and preaching of the Church. How else could she be called *blessed* than by the ordinary means of the preaching of the Word of God by the Church in her worship? The special cult in the Church “justly honors Mary’s intervention into the mysteries of Christ” (*Const. on the Church*, #66). Because Mary is present in the Church as the first Christian and because she is the Church’s type, she must have her place in the spiritual life of the faithful. Quite possibly this attention to Mary in the Church has been and might still be subject to excesses which some fear compromise the adoration especially due to the Holy Trinity. Still if we keep in mind, in our Marian devotion, that Mary possesses nothing for herself because this would be contrary to her spirit of poverty and humility as the *Magnificat* brings out. A true mother and handmaid, she refers all to the head of the family, her Son, and His purpose. Mindful of this we need have no fear of worship which is out-of-bounds. As the Gospel shows, Mary’s whole existence and being is clothed in Jesus and for Jesus. She has no meaning outside of Him. Thus, the fear of excess so prevalent today must not give way to a silence and avoidance of Mary in the Christian conscience, veneration and liturgy. This too, would be equally unfaithful to the Gospel of Christ.

The basic beliefs of the Church are expressed in her dogmas which in their turn are proclaimed in the Church's worship, for liturgy is nothing other than dogma prayed. Dogma thus is a definite call made by God to men. The divine love which appeals to us through dogma demands our attention and response. Thus, the dogmatic person which is the Mother of God implies a divine invitation to devotion to Mary. This call comes from the very heart of the redemption itself. Because of this call, Marian devotion is firmly embedded in the Christian religion and its neglect leads to a disfigurement of Christian life.

The communion of saints demands that we venerate these blessed in Christ. The place which a chosen creature occupies in God's love determines how much we should honor this particular person in our religious lives. By reason of her unique holiness, which is an example of faith, obedience, constancy and love for all the faithful in Christ, Mary is at the summit in the devotion of this communion of Saints. Our full cooperation in the mystery of Christ demands our own personal, subjective acceptance of redemption, a true apostolic life for the spread of His kingdom, and a true belief in the Church's teachings. Because Our Lady made these aspects of the Mystery her own, she is our example. As a result she is a really essential structural principle of the redeeming mystery brought by Christ alone. Full Christian life can only be Church life and must also be essentially Marian within the Christian order of salvation.

Mary has an apostolic part to play, not in the sense that like the apostles she was one of the founders and leaders of the Church, but in the sense that she was, like them, an eye-witness of the life of Christ, and like them, proclaims what she has actually seen. What we know of Christ before His public ministry is the result of Mary's apostolic role in relating to St. Luke the details of the infancy of Christ, and it is in view of this function that Mary enters the Gospels.

Today's Marian devotion has a twofold mariological principle, namely: Mary's personal redemption and her participation in the redemption of all men; and Mary as the new Eve and prototype of the Church. These two outlooks are not mutually exclusive but complementary:

If your point of departure in Mariology is faith, as the inspiration of every sacramental reception must be, then you are bound to proceed from Mary's subjective redemption or free commitment in faith in

order to arrive at the point where we can see how her personal appropriation of objective redemption (Christ and His life) was determined and given a specific and unique meaning by her motherhood. From this point of view the basic mariological principle is Mary as the new Eve, prototype of the Church and of every redeemed individual. On the other hand, if the objective sacramental gift (Christ) is the starting point of consideration then you must proceed from Mary and her bodily conception of Christ in order to shed light upon her subjective participation in her own redemption and that of all men.⁴

It must be remembered that Mary can only be understood when seen in the perspective of Christ. It is wrong to view Christ from the perspective of Mary. This is known as "Marianism." If we fail to encounter Christ directly at the very heart of Mary, then, we have misunderstood her true greatness, namely; the unfathomable faith in her reception of Christ and her longing for the only Mediator.

Together with Mary and under her influence as Mother, we encounter Christ the Man directly, and He, as God, in turn leads us to the Father. In this sense we see Christ as giving Mary to us as mother rather than as Mary giving us Christ. In her conception of Christ and her passing Him on, Our Lady can be seen as giving Christ to us. This is the meaning of the phrase "through Mary to Christ." She is not a link between God and ourselves, but the one "grace-filled" womb which gives birth to us as Christ's brothers.

Our devotion to Mary does not make it easier for us to lead vicariously Christian lives by substituting Mary for ourselves. We grow in holiness as God penetrates more deeply in our souls. This demands our personal, free commitment. And it cannot be done by enlisting Mary's services to make up for our essential shortcomings and failure in total surrender to God in faith. Mary is merciful, but her mercy is entirely derived from the compassion of Christ who showered His mercy superabundantly on her as the firstfruit of the redemption. Mary's maternal quality of mercy is never to be regarded as a kind of counterbalance to Christ's divine justice, even if her intervention is really effective.

Marian cult in the Church's liturgy and in extra-liturgical and paraliturgical devotions is essentially a manifestation of *hope*. This is true of all *devotio sanctorum*. The Christian in his human longing

⁴ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

lights the candle, fingers the beads, contemplates the one depicted in a holy picture or statue as tangible supplications of God. These are basic to our human nature because even in prayer our senses need to be led. These external images should lead to a genuine internal experience. For by means of the intercession of the saints, and especially the Mother of God, the suppliant hopes to inflame his heart and will and make them both kneel in homage. The numerous "fringe manifestations can be understood if they are viewed in the light of the symbolism which is so closely interwoven with the lives of men who attain to invisible realities by means of what is visible."⁵ These manifestations are as old as the human race itself. Man has need of such props and no intellectualism can ever succeed in eradicating them entirely from the religious life of the people. Religion is not purely a rational matter. A cursory glance at scripture shows this. Weren't the prophets considered as outcasts and the "nuts" of society in the Old Testament? Christ himself used *props* in creating His great miracles, and He was Himself the supreme outcast of society.

The danger comes when religion is reduced to mere ritualism and folklore and is imprisoned in earthly reality. Thus there is need for these *fringe manifestations* to be subjected to dogmatic enlightenment but with due caution lest a successful and brutal attack on the human incarnations of such spiritual forms kill the inner human spirit.

All current devotions to Our Lady in the Church are merely expressions of the reality of the Mother of God in a regional and temporal context and are to be understood as such. Mary's role is one of service. She was a helper on earth at different times in her life and each time her service was different, suited to the occasion. She was a guide and guard to Christ as a child; she was a nurse to Elizabeth; she was a good friend at Cana; she was an ideal and a source of solace to the young, persecuted Church at Jerusalem. Why should she not continue her earthly service in heaven? The Mother of God at a given time and place in history, in order to fulfill a need of a particular people, manifested herself to those people to help them. She satisfied their hopes and strengthened their faith. As a result, these manifestations were beneficial to the whole Church in confirm-

⁵ Schillebeeckx, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

ing the faith of her members. But these private appearances of Mary are external to the constitution of the Church. They are not essential to it in the same way as public revelation is. In the sacramental Church, instituted and completed by Christ, everything necessary for our salvation and sanctification is present in abundance. No new law or dogma, however, is ever proclaimed in private appearances, and they should never be used to settle questions brought up in theological discussion. What these private revelations of Mary do tell us is that they are acts of loving solicitude on the part of God and our heavenly Mother. In these revelations, the dogmatic and moral content of faith is confronted with present day situations, which, when authenticated by the Church, make known God's concrete will in an exceptional and *charismatic* manner to men, who are so firmly tied to visible and tangible manifestations of the invisible realities of life because of their humanity.

Our answer to this concretized love of God and His mother is the devotional cult which recalls the fact of the appearance itself. In other words, the devotions to "Our Lady of Lourdes," "Our Lady of Fatima," "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel," "Our Lady of the Rosary," etc., are never *absolute*, but the veneration of Our Lady is.

Therefore, our answer to this question of Our Lady's place in the Church is the traditional Catholic answer which demands that we, as Christians, venerate the holy Mother of God. So it seems that greater stress should be applied to the veneration of Mary on the feasts established in the Church, especially the five explicitly Christ-centered ones of the *Annunciation*, which emphasizes the expectant handmaidship of the *Daughter of Sion*; the *Immaculate Conception* with its stress of Mary's fulness of grace; the *Nativity* and its Marian emphasis on faith and virginity; the *Presentation* with its orientation toward Mary's holiness and her complete surrender to God in her Christ-offering; and the *Assumption* with its centering on Mary's Christ-given establishment in power.

But whatever the shift in emphasis in Marian devotion may be—Mary as mother *in* the Church (her motherhood in faith), or *of* the Church (her regal prerogatives)—the one thing all devotions to Mary, both liturgical and private, demonstrate is her own prophecy that all nations will call her blessed. This we cannot deny, and, at heart, it is her motherhood which has caused it all.