



An Ecumenical Title for Mary

**Titus
Cranny, S.A.**

The Christian world honors the Blessed Virgin Mary. For Catholics she is the Mother of God and the Mother of men, for our Eastern brethren and the Orthodox she is the *Theotokos*, all-holy, ever-Virgin. For many other Christians she is the Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus.

We like to think of Our Lady under the concept of Christian Unity. She bears a relationship surely to all baptized Christians for as the Mother of Christ she is also the Mother of all of His members. She should be no obstacle or barrier to unity, but one who promotes and helps to attain and perfect it. Her will is completely united to that of her divine Son.

The notion of Mary and unity has been emphasized by a title and devotion which began at the turn of this century under Anglican auspices. Fr. Paul James Francis, S.A., and Mother Lurana Mary Francis, S.A., founded the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor, New York and were deeply devoted to the Mother of God. From their love came a new name: Our Lady of the Atonement. It stressed Mary's role in the mystery of salvation; it also emphasized her function as patroness of Christian Unity. For by dividing the word atonement to read at-one-ment, we can say that Mary is Our Lady of the At-one-ment, or Unity.

It is significant that two Anglicans should have begun this devotion. When they entered the Church on October 30, 1909 together with a small band of followers they carried over their special love for the Mother of God. In time it was approved by authorities in the Church and is now kept as a feast of the Graymoor Friars and Sisters

and by those associated with them in the promotion of the Unity apostolate.

This title for Mary has many ecumenical overtones. It began when its originators were members of the Anglican Church. It stresses Mary's role in unity, for she prays with her Son "that all may be one." She is the Mother of Unity, as the Pope is fond of honoring her. This title also reminds us that Mary is the model and pattern for all human striving for union with God.

St. Augustine first used the title, Mother of Unity, as far as we know. But perhaps it never has as much application as at the present time. For now when the entire Christian world is longing for unity as never before Mary stands as the model of union with God, as the great intercessor before God for all men; she is the head of the communion of saints. She is the Mother of the entire Christian family, not merely the spiritual mother of individual Christians, but the Mother of men as the Christian community, united in Christ and to each other by the grace of her Son, won on Calvary.

Pope Paul VI reminds us of the role of Mary in leading souls to Christ. She guides and directs men to her Son. She is the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of His Church. "You will find Mary within the whole of the Christian mystery, for devotion to her is not an end in itself but the main road leading to Christ, to the glory of God, and to love of the Church."

Mary is herself perfectly united to Jesus in heaven. She facilitates the union of all her other children, her sons and daughters on earth, so that they may be united to God in this life and prepare for the unending joys of heaven. While leading on earth a life common to all men, one filled with family concerns and labors, she was always intimately united with her Son and cooperated in the work of the Saviour in a manner altogether special. Now that she has been taken up into heaven, with her maternal charity, she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and are surrounded by dangers and difficulties, she will care until they are led to their blessed fatherland. All should venerate her and commend their life and apostolate to her motherly concern. (Vatican II, Constitution on Church, 52-69)

All should honor Mary for her role in the unity of all Christians and imitate her concern for the interests of her Son. All should pray daily to her for the cause so necessary for the world today: "that all may be one."