

## Session 16: Mary and Joseph

**HYMN:** Hail, Queen of Heaven, the  
Ocean Star



Hail, Queen of Heaven, the ocean  
star,  
guide of the wand'rer here below.  
Thrown on life's surge, we claim thy  
care;

save us from peril and from woe.  
Mother of Christ, star of the sea,  
pray for the wand'rer; pray for me.

O gentle, chaste, and spotless maid,  
we sinners make our pray'rs through  
thee.

Remind thy Son that He has paid  
the price of our iniquity.  
Virgin most pure, star of the sea,  
pray for the sinner; pray for me.

And while to Him Who reigns above,  
in godhead one, in Persons three,  
the source of life, of grace, of  
love,  
homage we pay on bended knee,  
do thou, bright queen, star of the  
sea,  
pray for thy children; pray for me.

**PRAYER:** See Eph 1:17-19.  
Let us pray: O God,  
grant us a spirit  
of wisdom and insight  
to know You clearly.  
Enlighten our innermost vision,  
that we may know the great hope  
to which You have called us,  
the wealth of Your glorious heritage  
to be distributed among the members  
of the Church,  
and the immeasurable scope  
of Your power  
in us who believe.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Your Son,  
Who lives and reigns with You  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
— Amen

**FIRST READING:** Lk 1:26-35,38  
The Lord be with you.  
— *And with your spirit*  
A Reading from the holy Gospel

according to Luke  
— *Glory to You, O Lord*  
The angel Gabriel  
was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee named Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed  
to a man named Joseph,  
of the House of David.  
The virgin's name was Mary.

Upon arriving,  
the angel said to her:  
"Rejoice,  
O highly favoured daughter!  
The Lord is with you.  
Blessed are you among women."  
She was deeply troubled  
by his words, and wondered  
what his greeting meant.

The angel went on to say to her,  
"Do not fear, Mary.  
You have found favour with God.  
You shall conceive and bear a Son  
and give Him the name Jesus.  
Great will be His dignity  
and He will be called  
Son of the Most High.  
The Lord God will give Him  
the throne of David His father.  
He will rule over the House of Jacob  
forever  
and His reign will be without end."

Mary said to the angel,  
"How can this be,  
since I do not know man?"  
The angel answered her:  
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you  
and the power of the Most High  
will overshadow you;  
hence, the holy Offspring to be born  
will be called Son of God."

Mary said:  
"I am the servant of the Lord.  
Let it be done to me as you say."  
With that the angel left her.  
The Gospel of the Lord  
— *Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ*

**SECOND READING:** Mt 1:18-21,24  
The Lord be with you.  
— *And with your spirit*  
A Reading from the holy Gospel  
according to Matthew  
— *Glory to You, O Lord*  
Now this is how  
the birth of Jesus Christ  
came about. —

When His mother Mary  
was betrothed to Joseph,  
but before they lived together,  
she was found to be with child  
through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband,  
since he was a righteous man,  
yet unwilling  
to expose her to shame,  
decided to divorce her quietly.

Such was his intention when,  
behold, the angel of the Lord  
appeared to him in a dream and said,  
"Joseph, son of David,  
do not be afraid  
to take Mary your wife  
into your home.  
For it is through the Holy Spirit  
that this Child  
has been conceived in her.  
She will bear a Son  
and you are to name Him Jesus,  
because He will save His people  
from their sins."

When Joseph awoke,  
he did as the angel of the Lord  
had commanded him  
and took his wife into his home.  
The Gospel of the Lord  
— *Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ*

#### IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

In the Apostles' Creed,  
we say that Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
was "conceived by the Holy Spirit"  
and "born of the virgin Mary."

We mean that God the Son  
took a Body and Soul like ours,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit,  
in the womb of Mary,  
who was a virgin,  
being born from her  
in a stable at Bethlehem  
on Christmas Day.

Joseph was not Jesus'  
biological father,  
but he was His guardian  
and His legal father.  
As legal father,  
he gave Jesus legal paternity  
in the line of King David.

All humans except Mary  
have contracted  
the guilt and stain of original sin.  
It is a divinely revealed dogma  
that, through the merits  
of her divine Son,  
Mary was free from the least

guilt or stain of all sin  
from the first moment  
of her existence —  
i.e., from the very instant  
she was conceived  
in the womb of her mother, Anna.  
We call this privilege of hers  
the *Immaculate Conception*.

It is a divinely revealed dogma  
that Mary, having completed  
the course of her earthly life,  
was assumed body and soul  
into heavenly glory.

We call this event the *Assumption*.

The Church is very devoted to Mary:  
*first*, because she is sinless;  
*second*, because she is God's Mother,  
since Jesus Christ, her Son,  
Who was born of her as Man,  
is not only Man,  
but is also truly God;  
*third*, because she is our mother,  
since we are Jesus's brothers,  
bound by the Fourth Commandment  
to honour our mother.

The Church's chief prayer to Mary  
is the "Hail, Mary."

The Angel Gabriel  
and St. Elizabeth,  
inspired by the Holy Spirit,  
made the first part of this prayer.  
The Church,  
guided by the Holy Spirit,  
made the second part.

We should say the *Hail Mary* often:  
to remind us of the Incarnation  
of the Son of God;  
to honour Mary, God's mother;  
and to ask her to pray for us  
always, but especially at death.

We should pray to St. Joseph  
as patron of the universal Church,  
patron of workers,  
patron of a happy death,  
and patron of Canada.

#### BIBLE READING

Is 18-34

Most of the Bible Reading  
for next week  
describes what happens  
to those who forsake God,  
but it is interspersed  
with God's promises  
to be gracious to His people.

That is our subject next week:  
God's graciousness,  
or "Grace,"  
which He shows us principally  
through "The Sacraments."

## Mary and Joseph

### Introduction

In the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, Christ is the Head; we are the members. He is the vine; we are the branches. He is God the Son, so He has supernatural life, *Zoë*, by nature, but in His Incarnation He took on human life, *Bios*. We have only *Bios* by nature, but we can acquire *Zoë* from Him.<sup>1</sup>

Among Christ's members, Mary is "pre-eminent" — not so much because she is His mother, but more<sup>2</sup> because of her complete adherence to God the Father's will, God the Son's redemptive work, and God the Holy Spirit's promptings.<sup>3</sup> As Mary's spouse, Joseph "shared" in God's Incarnation as "no other human" did except her.<sup>4</sup>

### Immaculate conception

The first hint of Mary's singular role in our salvation came right after Adam and Eve's fall, when God said to the serpent, Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at His heel."<sup>5</sup> Thousands of years later, God fulfilled this promise:<sup>6</sup> He "sent forth His Son born of a woman"<sup>7</sup> to "destroy the works of the devil."<sup>8</sup>

Mary lived in Nazareth, in Galilee: "a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph."<sup>9</sup> "Betrothed" did not mean "engaged"; it meant "married." A betrothed couple were man and wife in every legal and religious sense; their union could not be dissolved except by divorce.<sup>10</sup> However, they did not live together until after the formal home-taking, months or even years later.<sup>11</sup>

In an event we call the *Annunciation*,<sup>12</sup> God sent the angel Gabriel to ask Mary to conceive (or beget), to bear, and to give birth to His Son. And Mary consented, saying, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say."<sup>13</sup>

Now for Mary to give "free assent"<sup>14</sup> to God's request, she had to be totally free from the *stain*<sup>15</sup> of Adam and Eve's original sin, which had wounded human nature, making it inclined to sin and subject to ignorance and death.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, God — seeing<sup>17</sup> Mary's consent — had already enriched her with gifts appropriate to her role. She possessed *Zoë* to the fullest extent possible for a human, for there was nothing in her *Bios* to oppose it.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Gabriel addressed her not as "Mary," but as "full of grace," or "highly favoured daughter." And he continued, "The Lord is with you. Blest are you among women"<sup>19</sup> — "You have been blessed"<sup>20</sup> by God above all other women."

Gradually, as the Church pondered this blessing, she realized that Mary had been redeemed and sanctified — by Christ — at the very beginning of her existence.<sup>21</sup>

1 See the talk on "The Communion Among the Saints in the Body of Christ."

2 See CCC 506.

3 See CCC 967.

4 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 1. See Appendix 4.

5 Gn 3:15

6 See CCC 410.

7 Gal 4:4

8 1 Jn 3:8

9 See Lk 1:26-27.

10 See Mt 19:28.

11 See the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Also see Dt 22:24; Jn 14:2-3.

12 "Announcement"

13 See Lk 1:26-38.

14 CCC 490

15 See CCC 411, 491, 508, 966.

16 See CCC 405. Also see the talk on "Creation and The Fall."

17 CCC 490. God is not subject to time; see the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity."

18 As there is in our own fallen *Bios*; see the talk on "Supernatural Life."

19 Lk 1:28

20 Past participle of "bless." All such words were once pronounced with two syllables: *blessèd*, a pronunciation largely abandoned in the 16th century, but still common in religious language. Today, rather than "favoured," it often means "holy, revered, consecrated." To make its original meaning understood, we pronounce (and often spell) it with one syllable: *blest*. See the talk on "The Beatitudes."

21 The Redemption affects all time; see the talk on "The Communion Among the Saints in the Body of Christ."

Finally, on December 8 1854, Pope Pius IX published *Ineffabilis Deus*, in which he recapped what the Church had always believed about Mary and then solemnly proclaimed the *dogma*<sup>22</sup> of the "Immaculate Conception": that Mary had been "preserved immune from all stain of original sin" from the very first moment of her existence — not for any merit of her own, but by "a singular grace and privilege of almighty God" and by virtue of "the merits of Jesus Christ."

Ever since, "Immaculate Conception" has been one of Mary's titles. It refers to her "sinlessness from the first moment of her existence"<sup>23</sup> — *not* to the virginal conception of Jesus in her womb, as many people think.<sup>24</sup>

By "immaculate" ("perfectly clean"), the Church means "completely sinless." She does *not* mean "without sexual intercourse," as though sexual intercourse is intrinsically dirty or sinful.<sup>25</sup> Mary was conceived in the womb of her mother, Anna, after normal sexual intercourse between Anna and her husband, Joachim. The Church calls this conception *immaculate* because, unlike every other human conception,<sup>26</sup> it did not transmit original sin.

The Church stresses that the "splendour" of Mary's "unique holiness" comes entirely from Christ. Like us, Mary is redeemed by Him — she herself called God her "Saviour"<sup>27</sup> — but "in a more exalted fashion":<sup>28</sup> from her very conception.

### All-holy

*Ineffabilis Deus* is concerned chiefly with Mary's preservation from original sin, but Pope Pius IX made it clear throughout the document that Mary was entirely free from *all* sin for the *whole* of her life: she did not contract<sup>29</sup> original sin when she was conceived and she never committed any personal sin afterward.

"To her more grace was given than was necessary to conquer sin completely," the Pope said. In fact, it is impossible to imagine "innocence and sanctity" greater than hers. It was *fitting*,<sup>30</sup> he noted, that just as God's only begotten Son has a Father in Heaven whom the Seraphim<sup>31</sup> praise as "Holy! holy! holy!"<sup>32</sup> so He had a mother on earth who was never without "the splendour of holiness."<sup>33</sup>

Mary was not *incapable* of sin. Like Eve in her original holiness,<sup>34</sup> she had complete freedom to say *yes* to God in trust and love, or to say *no* in pride and scorn. Unlike Eve, she said *yes* her whole life long. At the Annunciation, she said "Let it be."<sup>35</sup> In Latin, "Let it be" is *Fiat*, so Mary's *yes* is often called her *Fiat*.

### Virgin

When Gabriel said that Mary would "conceive and bear a son," she asked, "How can this be, since I do not know man?"<sup>36</sup> By this question, she revealed not only that she was a virgin, but also that *she had the intention of remaining a virgin.*<sup>37</sup>

To see this, remember that Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but not yet living with him. If she had expected to have normal marital relations with him, she would not

22 From the Greek *dogma* ("declaration," "decree"): a doctrine taught by the Church as part of divine Revelation, from either Sacred Scripture or Sacred Tradition. It may be taught solemnly (like the Immaculate Conception) or ordinarily (like the constant teaching on the sanctity of life).

23 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Immaculate Conception."

24 Partly because a woman's "conception" can mean her own conception in her mother's womb or the conception of a child in her own womb.

25 "The acts in marriage by which the intimate and chaste union of the spouses takes place are noble and honourable" (Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 49). We say Mary was conceived *immaculate*, not *immaculately*.

26 Except, of course, that of Jesus.

27 Lk 1:47

28 CCC 492

29 See CCC 404. Also see the talk on "Creation and the Fall."

30 See the "Introduction" to this course.

31 The highest angels, whose name comes from the Hebrew *saraf*, plural *serafim* ("burning," "glowing").

32 See Is 6:3; Rv 4:8.

33 Pope Pius IX: *Ineffabilis Deus* 26

34 See the talk on "Creation and the Fall."

35 Lk 1:38

36 Lk 1:34

37 See Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 18 (see Appendix 4); Augustine: *De Virginitate*, 4.

have asked this question, for the answer would have been obvious: "You do not 'know man' yet, but once you and your husband start living together, you will."

However, Gabriel intimated, no man, not even Joseph, would be involved. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," he said; "hence, the holy Offspring to be born will be called Son of God."<sup>3 8</sup>

Before long, Mary was found to be with child.<sup>3 9</sup> Joseph, "an upright man," but "unwilling to expose her to the Law,"<sup>4 0</sup> decided to divorce her quietly.<sup>4 1</sup>

Matthew tells us that Joseph is just (he does not want to marry an adulterous woman), but also compassionate (he does not want to expose her to the shame of a public divorce trial). But Matthew does not give us the cultural and religious background to Joseph's dilemma. By both Jewish and Roman law, a husband *had to* divorce an adulterous wife. He could do it publicly or quietly, but not secretly, for a bill of divorce<sup>4 2</sup> required two witnesses. If he did it quietly, he could not recover the bride price he had paid or keep the dowry he had received.<sup>4 3</sup>

"He did not know how to deal with Mary's astonishing motherhood," says Pope John Paul II. "He certainly sought an answer to this unsettling question, but above all, he sought a way out of what was for him a difficult situation."<sup>4 4</sup>

Before Joseph could act, an angel intervened, saying, "Have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this Child."<sup>4 5</sup> Accordingly, Joseph received Mary "into his home as his wife."<sup>4 6</sup>

However, Matthew adds, "he had no relations with her at any time before she bore a Son."<sup>4 7</sup> His concern is to affirm that Jesus' conception was virginal; his wording does not imply that Joseph did have "relations" with Mary after the birth.<sup>4 8</sup>

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, "being — so it was supposed — the son of Joseph."<sup>4 9</sup> However, by the time He was twelve, He knew that God was His Father. That year, when His parents left Jerusalem<sup>5 0</sup> to return to Nazareth, He remained behind, without their knowing. When they finally found Him, in the temple,<sup>5 1</sup> Mary said, "Son, why have You done this to us? You see that Your father and I have been seeking You in sorrow." And Jesus replied, "Why did you search for Me? Did you not know I had to be in My Father's house?"<sup>5 2</sup>

Accordingly, the Church has always held that Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb *solely* by the Holy Spirit: "by the Holy Spirit without human seed,"<sup>5 3</sup> or sperm. Of course, every child is conceived through the power of God, but usually with the co-operation of a man and a woman. Jesus was conceived not just by the Holy Spirit's *power*, but *by the Holy Spirit Himself*.<sup>5 4</sup>

Only two evangelists mention Jesus' virginal conception.<sup>5 5</sup> However, Mary must have been their source, and she probably did not talk a lot about her virginity.

### Ever-virgin

Mary, then, intended to remain a virgin even in marriage. In the nature of things,

38 Lk 1:35

39 See Mt 1:18.

40 See Nm 5:11-31.

41 See Mt 1:19; Dt 22:13-29, 24:1-4.

42 See Nm 5:11-31; Dt 22:13-29, 24:1-4; Mt 19:7; Mk 10:4.

43 See Scott Nassau: *The Jewish Background to Joseph's Intention to Divorce Miryam*.

44 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 3. See Appendix 4.

45 Mt 1:20

46 Mt 1:24

47 Mt 1:25

48 "Until" and "before" are ambiguous; they may or may not imply "not after." Compare the ambiguity in "good to the last slice" (is the last slice included?) or "I know" ("I know now" or "I knew already?")

49 Lk 3:23

50 Where they went every year for the Passover.

51 "Sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions."

52 See Lk 2:41-49.

53 CCC 496. Here, "seed" means "sperm." See also CCC 497-498.

54 "To show that His Body was real, He was born of a woman. But in order to manifest His Godhead, He was born of a virgin" (Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, Article 2, Reply to Objection 2).

55 See Mt 1:18; Lk 1:34-35.

there can be no direct evidence that she did, but it does seem *fitting*.

- Just as Jesus is, in His Godhead, the only begotten Son of God His Father, so it is fitting that He be, in His humanity, the only begotten son of His mother.<sup>5 6</sup>
- It would not be fitting that Mary, after conceiving by the Holy Spirit, should have sexual intercourse with anyone else.
- For Mary to have sexual intercourse with a man after Christ's birth would make it appear that she was not satisfied with her one, perfect Son.
- It would be presumptuous of Joseph to have sexual intercourse with Mary knowing that she had conceived by the Holy Spirit.<sup>5 7</sup>

What does the Bible mean, then, by Jesus's "brothers and sisters"?<sup>5 8</sup>

It means His "relatives."<sup>5 9</sup> In fact, the Bible uses "brother" for any male relative except descendants (called "sons"<sup>6 0</sup>) and direct ancestors (called "fathers."<sup>6 1</sup>)

And why is Jesus called Mary's "first-born Son"<sup>6 2</sup> if she had no other sons?

"First-born son" was a *technical* term in Jewish religious and civil law.<sup>6 3</sup>

The Church has always called Mary "*the virgin*," as though virginity was "a permanent fact" in her life.<sup>6 4</sup> The term "ever-virgin" has been used since 374.<sup>6 5</sup> After 553, it was used in the liturgy.

### Son of David

The "Annunciation" usually means Gabriel's "announcement" of the Incarnation to Mary. However, Joseph, Mary's husband, experienced his own "annunciation."<sup>6 6</sup>

"Joseph, son of David," the angel said to him, "have no fear about taking Mary as your wife.... She is to have a Son and you are to name Him Jesus."<sup>6 7</sup>

What is the significance of this address: "son of David"?

At God's command, the prophet Samuel visited Jesse, in Bethlehem, about 1011 BC, and anointed his son David king.<sup>6 8</sup> David reigned in Jerusalem 1004-971 BC, and God made him a promise: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before Me; your throne shall stand firm forever."<sup>6 9</sup>

However, when David's son Solomon died in 931 BC, the kingdom was divided into two: Judah, which contained Jerusalem, and Israel. In 586 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. He arrested Zedekiah, the last king of David's line in Judah, and killed his sons in front of him. Then he blinded him, bound him, and transported him to Babylon.<sup>7 0</sup>

But some 200 years earlier, Isaiah had foretold the coming of the Messiah. "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse," he said, "and from his roots a bud shall blossom."<sup>7 1</sup> And Micah had prophesied that from Bethlehem, in Judah, would

56 Man and woman both beget, for each contributes a gamete (sperm or ovum) containing half the offspring's chromosomes. Besides begetting, the woman also bears and gives birth.

57 See Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, Question 28, Article 3.

58 See Mk 3:32, 6:3; 1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19.

59 In Gn 13:8, the word translated "brethren" (older English plural of "brothers") by Knox is translated "kinsmen" by the New American Bible; the relationship is uncle-nephew, for Lot was Abram's "brother's son" (see Gn 12:5; Neh 5:7). In Jer 34:9, Knox uses "kinsfolk" where the New American Bible uses "brother"; the relationship is "members of the same tribe," Judah.

60 For example, Matthew starts his Gospel with "a family record of Jesus Christ, son of David" (Mt 1:1).

61 For example, God identified Himself to Moses as "the God of your fathers: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:16). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were Moses' ancestors.

62 Lk 2:7

63 Whether or not there were other sons, the first-born son was consecrated to God (see Ex. 13:2, 34:19). If he had brothers, he inherited a "double share" of his father's property (see Dt 21:17; Is 61:7).

64 See Pope John Paul II: General Audience, August 28 1996, 31st in a series of 70 on Mary.

65 In a creed by Epiphanius; by the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the Lateran Council of 649, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the Second Council of Lyons (1274), and Pope Pius XII: *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950). Mary's perpetual virginity was affirmed by Origen (c 185 - c235), Athanasius (c 297 - 383), Cyril of Jerusalem (c 315 - c 386), John Chrysostom (347 - 407), Gregory of Nyssa (d. c. 385), Jerome (c 342 - 420), Augustine (354 - 430), and Pope Leo I (d. 461).

66 See Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 3, 12, 17, 19. See Appendix 4.

67 Mt 1:20-21

68 See 1 Sm 16:1-13.

69 2 Sm 7:16

70 See 2 Kgs 25:6-7.

71 See Is 11:1-16.

come "one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old."<sup>72</sup>

The Jews expected, then, that the Messiah would be of the House of David. Consequently, they used "Son of David" as a *Messianic* title. For example,

- when Jesus asked the Pharisees, "What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is He?" they answered, "David's."<sup>73</sup>
- those who believed in Jesus addressed Him as "Son of David."<sup>74</sup>
- Matthew starts his Gospel with "a family record of Jesus Christ, son of David."<sup>75</sup>
- when the children shouted, "Hosanna<sup>76</sup> to the Son of David!" the Jewish authorities demurred, but Jesus accepted and endorsed the title.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, Gabriel had told Mary that God would give her Son "the throne of David His father" and that her Son would "rule over the House of Jacob forever": that His reign would be "without end."<sup>78</sup>

### Son of Joseph

Now biologically, Jesus had no human father. How could He claim to be the "Son of David"?

The answer is *through Joseph*.

When Caesar Augustus ordered a census of his empire, and everyone went "to his own town" to register, Joseph went (with his wife Mary, who was "with child") to "David's town," Bethlehem, "because he was of the house and lineage of David."<sup>79</sup>

Joseph, then, was a "son of David." And at his annunciation, he was addressed as such<sup>80</sup> by the angel — the only man other than Jesus to be given this title.

Moreover, it was as "son of David" that the angel commanded him to name Mary's Son "Jesus," meaning "God saves."<sup>81</sup>

Now it was the right of a Jewish father to name a child.<sup>82</sup> "In conferring the name," therefore, "Joseph declared his own legal fatherhood over Jesus, and in speaking the name He proclaimed the Child's mission as Saviour."<sup>83</sup>

Jesus is "Son of God" by the Holy Spirit, but He is "Son of David" by Joseph. It was Joseph who gave Jesus "legal paternity in the line of David."<sup>84</sup>

Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, but he was much more than a foster-father or a guardian: he was His "legal" father.<sup>85</sup> God called Joseph to take Mary as his wife so that Jesus "should be born of Joseph's spouse into the Messianic lineage of David."<sup>86</sup> We can see, then, why Matthew<sup>87</sup> and Luke<sup>88</sup> list the generations in Jesus' ancestry "according to the genealogy of Joseph."<sup>89</sup>

We must uphold not only Jesus' virginal conception, but also Joseph's marriage to Mary, for that is "the juridical basis of his fatherhood." Mary's Son "is also Joseph's Son" by virtue of that marriage.<sup>90</sup>

"Both of them deserve to be called Christ's parents."<sup>91</sup> What Mary said to Jesus — "Your father and I have been searching for you"<sup>92</sup> — was not just conventional;

72 See Mic 5:1-4; Mt 2:3-6.

73 Mt 22:42

74 See Mt 9:27, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9.

75 Mt 1:1

76 The Hebrew *Hosiahanna* means literally "Do save!"

77 See Mt 21:15-16; Ps 8:2.

78 Lk 1:32-33

79 See Lk 2:1-5.

80 See Mt 1:1-16 and Lk 3:23-38.

81 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 3. See Appendix 4.

82 See Lk 1:59-63.

83 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 12. See Appendix 4.

84 Pope John Paul II, in a prayer at St. Joseph's Oratory in Montréal, September 11 1984.

85 CCC 532

86 CCC 437. Accordingly, the Readings for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, are about lineage: 2 Sm 7:4-5, 12-14, 16; Ps 88; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; and Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24.

87 See Mt 1:1-16.

88 See Lk 3:23-38.

89 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 7. See Appendix 4.

90 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 7. See Appendix 4.

91 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 7. See Appendix 4.

92 Lk 2:48

it showed "the complete reality of the Incarnation" present in the Holy Family.<sup>93</sup>

Joseph was Jesus' father in the same way that he was Mary's husband: "in mind, not in the flesh."<sup>94</sup> Mary remained a virgin, but the spouses realized "all the goods of marriage": namely "offspring, fidelity, and the Sacrament."<sup>95</sup> Their "communion of virginal love" was "a true marriage."<sup>96</sup>

Many people have found it so difficult to accept "the sublime mystery" of Mary and Joseph's "spousal communion" that ever since the second century,<sup>97</sup> they have been led "to think of Joseph as advanced in age and to consider him Mary's guardian more than her husband." Rather, we should suppose not that he was elderly, "but that his interior perfection, the fruit of grace, led him to live his spousal relationship with Mary with virginal affection."<sup>98</sup>

God gave Joseph the responsibility of looking after His Son's entry into the world, and entrusted to his guardianship all Jesus' hidden life.<sup>99</sup> Joseph witnessed Jesus' birth,<sup>100</sup> the shepherds' adoration,<sup>101</sup> and the Magi's homage.<sup>102</sup> He "fulfilled for the Child Jesus the significant task of officially inserting the name 'Jesus, Son of Joseph of Nazareth' in the registry of the Roman Empire."<sup>103</sup> He hid Mary and the infant Jesus from Herod in Egypt.<sup>104</sup> He presided over Jesus' circumcision,<sup>105</sup> His support and education, and His presentation in the temple.<sup>106</sup>

Joseph was truly a father to Jesus.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Assumption

The Church has long believed that when Mary passed from this life, in an event called her *dormition*, or "falling asleep,"<sup>107</sup> Christ took her, body and soul, to Himself in Heaven. We say that she was *assumed* into Heaven; we call the event the *Assumption*. The Feast of the Assumption was celebrated by Christians as early as the fifth century and continuously from the seventh century onward.

There is no direct scriptural evidence for the Assumption, but Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) called it "probable" and said that to deny it would be "impious and blasphemous."<sup>108</sup> Again, it seems *fitting*.

- In her original holiness, Eve would not have died.<sup>109</sup> "Death made its entrance into human history"<sup>110</sup> as a result of her sin. We die because we inherit her fallen *Bios*, but Mary's *Bios* was unfallen.
- John of Damascus<sup>111</sup> called it "fitting" that Mary's body, which had preserved its virginity even through childbirth, should remain free from corruption.<sup>112</sup>

Scholars have noted that Jerusalem and Ephesus<sup>113</sup> have both claimed to be the site of Mary's dormition, but no one has ever claimed to have her body, even though the early Church sought and prized the relics<sup>114</sup> of saints.

93 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 21. See Appendix 4.

94 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 7. See Appendix 4.

95 Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 7. See Appendix 4.

96 See *Redemptoris Custos*, 7. See Appendix 4.

97 See, for example, the apocryphal *Gospel of James*, probably written about 145 AD.

98 See Pope John Paul II: General Audience, August 21 1996; *Redemptoris Custos*, 19-20 (see Appendix 4).

99 See Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 8. See Appendix 4.

100 See Lk 2:1-7.

101 See Lk 2:8-18.

102 Mt 2:1-12.

103 See Lk 2:1-5.

104 See Mt 2:13-23.

105 See Lk 2:21.

106 See Lk 2:22-40. Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Custos*, 9. See Appendix 4.

107 From the Latin *dormio*, *dormitum*, ("to sleep").

108 Pope Benedict XIV: *De Festis Beatae Virginis Mariae*, I, viii, 18

109 See CCC 376, 1008.

110 CCC 400

111 c 675 - c 749

112 John of Damascus: *Homily II on the Dormition of the Virgin*

113 In what is now Turkey, where, tradition has it, the apostle John took Mary (see Jn 19:27).

114 Objects connected with a saint, like part of the body or clothing or something the saint touched. The Church encourages the veneration of authentic relics. For example, relics of a martyr are placed in the altar stone when the altar is consecrated.



Finally, in 1950, after consulting the world's theologians and bishops, Pope Pius XII pronounced it to be a "divinely revealed dogma" that "Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."<sup>115</sup>

### Queen mother

After her Assumption, Mary "was exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords."<sup>116</sup>

To understand Mary's role as Queen,<sup>117</sup> we must realize that in the ancient kingdoms of the Near East, the queen was the king's mother, not his wife, for he often had many wives.<sup>118</sup> And when the Israelites asked the prophet Samuel for a king,<sup>119</sup> to make them "like other nations,"<sup>120</sup> they copied this practice.

From King David on, the queen was honoured as *Gebirah*, or "Great Lady." For example, when Bathsheba visited her son, King Solomon, "the king stood up to meet her and paid her homage."<sup>121</sup> Then he sat down upon his throne, and a throne was provided for the king's mother, who sat at his right."<sup>122</sup>

But *Gebirah* was more than a title; it was an office with authority. For example, when Adonijah sought the king's permission to wed Abishag, he said to the Queen Mother Bathsheba, "Please ask King Solomon, who will not refuse you."<sup>123</sup> The queen mother could advise and instruct the king as perhaps none of his other subjects would dare.<sup>124</sup>

Every king in David's dynasty had his mother for queen.<sup>125</sup> And just as the Queen Mother Bathsheba reigned beside David's first successor, Solomon, so the Queen Mother Mary reigns beside David's final and everlasting successor, Jesus.

### Wedding feast at Cana

We see Mary in her role as queen mother at the wedding feast in Cana.

The wine ran out, and she told her Son, "They have no more wine."<sup>126</sup>

It is a mere statement of fact. "But Jesus seems to respond in a way that is far out of proportion to His mother's simple observation."<sup>127</sup>

He began with "Woman." This was His "normal, polite way of addressing women,"<sup>128</sup> but a son addressing his mother<sup>129</sup> would usually add "a qualifying adjective or title."<sup>130</sup> Perhaps Jesus' formal address signified the start of His public ministry, which would initiate a new, more important, relationship with her.<sup>131</sup>

"Woman," He said, "how does this concern of yours involve Me? My hour has not yet come."<sup>132</sup> Mary did not answer Him, but she "instructed those waiting on table, 'Do whatever He tells you.'"<sup>133</sup> And, "at His mother's request,"<sup>134</sup> Jesus performed

115 Pope Pius XII: *Munificentissimus Deus*, 44

116 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 59

117 The whole of this section is taken from Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, 4.

118 For example, see the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh*, which dates, at least in part, from about 1198 BC.

119 Around 1000 BC.

120 1 Sm 8:20

121 When she had visited her husband, King David, she had "bowed in homage to the king" (1 Kgs 1:16).

122 1 Kgs 2:19

123 1 Kgs 2:17

124 Prv 31 contains, in the words of "Lemuel, King of Massa," "the advice which his mother gave him."

125 For example, "Jehoiachin, King of Judah," surrendered, "together with his mother" Nehushta (2 Kgs 24:12). "Say to the king and to the queen mother: come down from your throne; from your heads fall your magnificent crowns" (Jer 13:18). Twenty-seven kings are identified by their own names followed by their mothers' names (see 1 Kgs, 2 Kgs, 2 Chr).

126 Jn 2:1-3

127 Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, 2

128 See Mt 15:28; Lk 13:12; Jn 4:21, 8:10, 19:26, 20:15.

129 In Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

130 Eugene H. Merrill: *The Bible Knowledge Word Study*, "The Gospels"

131 Described when Jesus asked, "Who is My mother? Who are My brothers?" and, pointing to His disciples, said, "Whoever does the will of My heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to Me" (Mt 12:48-50). When a man is ordained a priest, Catholics frequently stop calling him by his Christian name and instead address him by a title that expresses the new, more important relationship: "Father."

132 Jn 2:4. See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation," Appendix.

133 Jn 2:5

134 CCC 1613

His first public miracle, changing water into wine.<sup>135</sup>

"Mary counsels her Son about the matter at hand; yet she counsels others to obey Him and not her. Jesus speaks to His mother as her Superior, yet He defers to her suggestion" — as one might expect a king of David's dynasty "to grant the wish of his queen mother."<sup>136</sup>

Just as the Queen Mother Bathsheba had interceded with King Solomon for Adonijah, so Mary interceded<sup>137</sup> with Jesus for the wedding couple.

### Queen of Heaven

Over the centuries, various Popes have called Mary "Queen."<sup>138</sup> For example, Pope Benedict XIV called her "Queen of Heaven and earth" and said that Christ the King has somehow communicated to her His ruling power.<sup>139</sup>

Finally, in 1954, Pope Pius XII proclaimed Mary's queenship authoritatively. Mary's Son "will rule over the house of Jacob forever"<sup>140</sup> as "Prince of Peace,"<sup>141</sup> "King of kings, and Lord of lords,"<sup>142</sup> he said. "But when we reflect on "the intimate connection" between mother and son, we readily acknowledge "the supreme royal dignity of the Mother of God"<sup>143</sup> and call her "Lady," "Ruler," "Queen."<sup>144</sup>

Christ is our King — by natural right, but also by the right He acquired when He redeemed us. Similarly, Mary is Queen because she is the King's mother, but also because of "the unique manner in which she assisted in our Redemption."<sup>145</sup>

Strictly speaking, we have only a King, namely Jesus; but Mary "has a share, though in a limited and analogous way, in His royal dignity" as His "associate" in His "struggle with His enemies and His final victory."<sup>146</sup>

Accordingly, Pope Pius XII decreed that the whole Church celebrate Mary's queenship May 31. With the reform of the liturgical calendar after the Second Vatican Council, it is now celebrated as a memorial August 22, exactly one week after the Solemnity of the Assumption, August 15.

### Mother of God

In the Gospels, Mary is most often called "the mother of Jesus."<sup>147</sup> However, when she visited her cousin Elizabeth after conceiving her divine Son, Elizabeth cried out, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"<sup>148</sup>

This was the first time the title "mother of the Lord," or its equivalent, "mother of God,"<sup>149</sup> had been used. However, it continued to be used. A prayer from third-century Egypt says, "We fly to your patronage, O holy mother of God."<sup>150</sup>

Bishop Nestorius of Constantinople<sup>151</sup> started to challenge the validity of the title<sup>152</sup> on Christmas Day in 428,<sup>153</sup> but Bishop Cyril of Alexandria<sup>154</sup> defended

135 See Jn 2:6-10.

136 Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, 4

137 See CCC 2618.

138 For example, Martin I (649-655), Agatho (678-681), Gregory II (714-731), Sixtus IV (1471-1484), and Benedict XIV (1740-1758).

139 See Benedict XIV: *Gloriosae Dominae*, 1748.

140 Lk 1:32

141 Is 9:5

142 Rv 19:16

143 Pope Pius XII: *Ad Caeli Reginam*, 8

144 Pope Pius XII: *Ad Caeli Reginam*, 12. Here, "Lady" has connotations of nobility. For example, the English address titled women as "my Lady."

145 Pope Pius XII: *Ad Caeli Reginam*, 35, 37

146 Pope Pius XII: *Ad Caeli Reginam*, 39

147 See Mt 1:16, 18, 12:46; Mk 3:31; Lk 8:19; Jn 2:1, 6:42, 19:25-26; Acts 1:14.

148 Lk 1:39-43

149 Jews replaced God's name, Yahweh, with His title, "Lord." See the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity."

150 Clement of Alexandria (c 150 - c 215), Origen (c 185 - c 254), and Alexander (d. 328; bishop of Alexandria from 313) all used it.

151 d. c. 451

152 In Greek, *Theotokos* ("God-bearer," "mother of God").

153 In what is now called the Nestorian Heresy, Nestorius argued that Mary had given birth to Christ's human nature (*Bios*), but not His divine nature (*Zoë*).

154 d. 444

it,<sup>155</sup> and, at the Council of Ephesus in 431, the Church authoritatively endorsed Cyril's arguments, explaining that we call Mary "mother of God" because, "from His very conception," God the Son "united to Himself" the Body<sup>156</sup> "He took from her."

Mary did not originate God, but she begot Him and bore Him. We can say that she "mothered" Him in the sense that a man "fathers" a child.

### Our mother too

Scripture says<sup>157</sup> that we are related to Christ like a body's members to its head<sup>158</sup> or branches to a vine.<sup>159</sup> But the Bible also calls us *Christ's brothers and sisters* and *God's adopted children*. (He has only one *begotten* Son.) For example,

- God "predestined us through Christ Jesus to be His adopted sons."<sup>160</sup>
- God planned to have us "share the image of His [begotten] Son," that the [begotten] Son "might be the first-born of many brothers"<sup>161</sup> and sisters.
- God sent His begotten Son "so that we might receive our status as adopted sons." To testify to our status, "God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of His Son, Which cries out 'Abba!' ('Father!')." <sup>162</sup> We are no longer slaves, but sons.<sup>163</sup>

Those "in Christ," then, are His brothers and sisters, children of His Father.

Christ is God's Son by nature, for God begets Him. We are God's children by adoption, but it is not just a legal fiction; we are "as if born"<sup>164</sup> to Him. We have the same status in His Family as the Son He begets; we are His Son's *co-heirs*.<sup>165</sup>

Now if we are fully Christ's brothers and sisters, then we have *the same mother*.<sup>166</sup> Jesus told us so from the cross, when, seeing His mother there with John, He said, "Woman, there is your son," and to John, "There is your mother."<sup>167</sup>

Jesus is Mary's only *begotten* Son, but her "spiritual motherhood" extends to all His adopted brothers and sisters. Jesus is the "first-born" of many siblings, "in whose generation and formulation she co-operates with a mother's love."<sup>168</sup> Spiritually, and therefore truly, she is "mother of us all."<sup>169</sup>

As first-born Son in God's Family, Jesus is the High Priest Who mediates between His Father and His siblings.<sup>170</sup> As queen-mother, Mary mediates "maternally"<sup>171</sup> — not bypassing her Son's unique mediation,<sup>172</sup> but sharing it, interceding with Him for those of her children "who still journey on earth." Accordingly, we invoke her as "Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix."<sup>173</sup>

"By her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity," Mary co-operated, and still co-operates, with her Son in restoring supernatural life to souls.<sup>174</sup> Thus her spiritual motherhood "continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect," or chosen.<sup>175</sup>

155 Arguing that a mother gives birth to a person, not a nature, and that Christ is a single Person — the Person of the Son of God — even though He has two natures.

156 The actual word used was "temple," from 1 Cor 3:16.

157 See the talk on "The Communion of the Saints in the Body of Christ."

158 See 1 Cor 12:12-27.

159 See Jn 15:4-5.

160 Eph 2:4-5

161 Rom 8:29

162 See Mt 6:9.

163 See Gal 4:5-7. For other examples, see Jn 1:10-12; Heb 2:11; 1 Jn 3:1.

164 The language of British Columbia's adoption legislation 1956-1995.

165 See Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7.

166 *Adelphos*, Greek for "brother," means literally "from the same womb" (Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, 3).

167 Jn 19:26-27. Jesus did not say, "I give her to you as your mother." He was not making a presentation; He was stating a fact, for she had been John's mother ever since He had made His apostles His brothers by giving them His Body to eat and His Blood to drink, the night before.

168 CCC 501

169 Augustine: *De Sancte Virginitate*, 6

170 See Heb 4:14-16.

171 See Pope John Paul II: *Redemptoris Mater*, 38.

172 See 1 Ti 2:5.

173 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 62

174 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 61

175 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 62

### Mother of the Church

In her Liturgy for the Solemnity of the Annunciation, the Church says that her own "beginnings" lie in Mary's consent to the Incarnation of God the Son.<sup>176</sup>

Mary conceived God's Son not just so that He could take human nature from her, but also so that in this nature He could redeem humanity. In her womb, God the Son not only took a human Body, but also united to Himself those who form His Mystical Body. Thus Mary, in carrying the Saviour, also carried the Church.

The Church has "issued from the womb of Mary like a Body united to its Head."<sup>177</sup> "The birth of Christ is the origin of the Christian people, and the birthday of the Head is also the birthday of the Body."<sup>178</sup>

On November 21 1964, during a Mass in St. Peter's at the end of the Second Vatican Council's third session, Pope Paul VI solemnly proclaimed Mary "Mother of the Church," adding that from now on we should give "even greater honour to the Mother of God under this most loving title."<sup>179</sup>

"Indelibly printed in my memory," Pope Benedict XVI said 40 years later, "is the moment when, hearing his words '*Mariam sanctissimam declaramus matrem Ecclesiae*' ('We declare Mary the most holy mother of the Church'), the Fathers<sup>180</sup> spontaneously rose at once and paid homage to the Mother of God, to our Mother, to the Mother of the Church, with a standing ovation."<sup>181</sup>

On February 11 2018, Pope Francis instituted a memorial to Mary as "Mother of the Church," to be celebrated the day after Pentecost, the Church's birth day.<sup>182</sup>

"Giving birth to the Creator, she nurtured the beginnings of the Church," says the special Preface for this memorial. "Standing beside the cross, she received the testament of divine love<sup>183</sup> and took to herself as sons and daughters all those who by the death of Christ are born to heavenly life."

The title "Mother of the Church" in no way "obscures or diminishes" Christ's unique mediation between God and men, for it "flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it."<sup>184</sup>

### Other titles

We have now described all Mary's principal titles and privileges. However, out of love for her and a desire to describe her role in the Body of Christ more fully, her children have given her other titles:<sup>185</sup>

- "*Ark of the Covenant*." The Old Testament Ark<sup>186</sup> contained the tablets of the Commandments, the priestly rod of the High Priest Aaron,<sup>187</sup> and a piece of the manna<sup>188</sup> with which God fed His people in the desert. Thus it foreshadowed Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant, for she carried in her womb the Word of

176 *Prayer Over the Offerings*, Solemnity of the Annunciation, March 25

177 Pope Pius X: *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum*, 10

178 Pope Leo I: *Sermon 6 on the Nativity of the Lord*

179 See Joseph Ratzinger: *God and the World*, Part III, 15, "How It All Started." The title "Mother of the Church" was used first in the twelfth century by Berengaud, Bishop of Treves (now Trier Germany), who died in 1125. Other bishops also used it, notably Antoninus of Florence (1389-1459), Lawrence Justinian of Venice (1381-1456), Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), and Pope Paul VI (*Credo of the People of God*). Pope John Paul II took "Mary as Mother of the Church" as the topic of his catechesis at his General Audience of September 17 1997, the 63rd in a series of 70 on Mary.

180 The Council's "Fathers" were the 2908 bishops who took part in it.

181 Pope Benedict XVI: *Homily marking the 40th anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council*, December 8 2005. Pope Benedict was not ordained a bishop until 1977, but he was present at the Council as theological adviser to Cardinal Joseph Frings, Archbishop of Cologne.

182 See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

183 Here, "testament" has the meaning it has in "last will and testament." See Jn 19:26.

184 CCC 969. Her role is "subordinate" and has the purpose of helping us "more closely adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer" (Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 62).

185 See the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Appendix 1.

186 See Ex 25:10-15 and the talks on "Liturgy: Public Worship" and "The First Three Commandments."

187 Heb 9:4

188 See Ex 16.

God Himself,<sup>189</sup> Who acts as High Priest in the sacrifice of the New Covenant<sup>190</sup> and Whose Body is the Bread that feeds our supernatural life.<sup>191</sup>

• "The new Eve." Just as Eve "had a share in the coming of death," so Mary "contributed to the coming of life."<sup>192</sup> Just as Eve, the mother of all those who live with *Bios*,<sup>193</sup> said *no* to God; so Mary, the mother of all those who live with *Zoë*, said *yes*. Death came through Eve, life through Mary.<sup>194</sup>

• "Seat of wisdom." In Mary's womb, "eternal Wisdom became Flesh."<sup>195</sup> Moreover, she kept everything her Son said and did "in memory";<sup>196</sup> she "treasured" it and "reflected" on it "in her heart."<sup>197</sup> Accordingly, the Church often reads "the most beautiful texts on wisdom in relation to Mary."<sup>198</sup>

• "Consoler of the Afflicted," "Health of the Sick," "Refuge of Sinners." Mary gives us "comfort in tribulation, relief in sickness, and liberating strength in guilt."<sup>199</sup>

### Patron of the universal Church

Joseph comes closer than anyone else to Mary's "eminent dignity."<sup>200</sup>

God the Father called him "to participate in a special way in His eternal fatherhood. The Son of God, Son of Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, lived at Joseph's side, entrusted to his loving fatherhood" and addressing him as "father."<sup>201</sup>

"Joseph guided and supported the Boy Jesus," teaching Him "the religious and social customs" of the Jews and "getting Him started in the carpenter's trade."<sup>202</sup>

We pray to Joseph for a happy death,<sup>203</sup> for workers, and for the universal Church.<sup>204</sup> "The Church is Christ's Body. Is it not logical, then, and necessary, that he to whom the eternal Father entrusted His Son should offer the same protection to the Church?"<sup>205</sup>

### Most blest among women

As a convinced Protestant, Scott Hahn ripped apart his grandmother's rosary after her death, asking God to "set her free from the chains of Catholicism that have bound her."<sup>206</sup> Now, as a convinced Catholic, he says that Mary is not "optional for Christians"; not merely "ornamental." She is really and spiritually our mother.

"To know the brotherhood of Jesus Christ," we must "know the mother whom we share" with Him, Hahn says. "Without her, our understanding of salvation can never be *familial*: it will be stalled out in the Old Covenant, where God's fatherhood was considered to be metaphorical, and man's sonship was more like servility."<sup>207</sup>

In the Church, Mary "is the highest after Christ and also closest to us,"<sup>208</sup> for she, totally sinless, is our mother. Our recognition of her as the most "blest among women" — <sup>209</sup> as "all generations" have declared<sup>210</sup> — is "intrinsic to Christian worship."<sup>211</sup>

189 Jn 1:1

190 Heb 5:5-10

191 See Jn 6:53. See the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

192 See CCC 488.

193 Gn 3:20

194 See CCC 494.

195 Pope John Paul II: *Vespers Address at St. Joseph's Seminary, New York, October 6 1995*

196 Lk 2:51

197 Lk 2:19

198 For example, Prv 8:1-9:6; Sir 24 (see CCC 721).

199 Pope Paul VI: *Marialis Cultus*, 57

200 Pope Leo XIII: *Quamquam Pluries*

201 Pope John Paul II: *Homily on the Solemnity of St. Joseph*, March 19 1993

202 Pope John Paul II: *Homily on the Solemnity of St. Joseph*, March 19 1983

203 For we may suppose that he died in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

204 See Appendix 5.

205 Pope John Paul II: *Homily on the Solemnity of St. Joseph*, March 19 1993

206 Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, Introduction

207 Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, 5

208 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 54

209 Lk 1:28

210 Lk 1:48

211 CCC 971

Our honour of Mary is radically different from our worship of God,<sup>212</sup> for we do not offer her sacrifice.<sup>213</sup> Mary is human like us: "the highest honour of our race."<sup>214</sup> However, our devotion to her "greatly fosters"<sup>215</sup> our adoration of God, for, as Mary herself said, it is God Who has done such great things for her.<sup>216</sup> It is the Artist we exalt when we praise His greatest work.

### 'My soul magnifies the Lord'

When Elizabeth addressed her as "mother of my Lord," Mary burst out with her *Magnificat*, a hymn of praise to God named for the first word in the Latin translation: "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*" — "My soul magnifies the Lord."<sup>217</sup>

The *Magnificat* "is entirely woven" from "threads drawn from the Word of God."<sup>218</sup> We see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God: how her will is one with the will of God.

"In these words she expresses her whole program of life." Notice "the humility with which she recedes into the background during Jesus' public life,"<sup>219</sup> knowing that He "must establish a new family" and that her hour will come "only with the cross," His "true hour."<sup>220</sup> "She knows that she will contribute to the salvation of the world only if, rather than carrying out her own projects, she places herself at the disposal of God's initiatives."<sup>221</sup>

Mary gave her *fiat* to God "*par excellence*." Through her docility, humility, and conformity to the Holy Spirit's promptings, she became the mother of God's Son, not only in the flesh, but also in the sense of His own words: "Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to Me."<sup>222</sup>

"In this sense, the Marian dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine dimension" — not only because Mary is sinless, while Peter and the other apostles were chosen from among sinners — but also because the Petrine task is "nothing other than to form the Church" in that holiness "which is already preformed and prefigured in Mary." Accordingly, "Mary's presence in the Upper Room" where Peter and the other apostles awaited the Holy Spirit<sup>223</sup> "is particularly significant."<sup>224</sup>

"O pure and holy virgin," the Church marvels: "the highest heavens cannot contain God, Whom you carried in your womb."<sup>225</sup>

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212 See Scott and Kimberly Hahn: *Rome Sweet Home*, 8, "Kimberly."

213 See the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

214 From the Response to the Psalm on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

215 CCC 971

216 See Lk 1:49.

217 See Lk 1:46-55 and Appendix 1.

218 See Gn 17:10, 22:18; 1 Sm 2:1-10; Jb 5:12; Ps 75:8, 98:3, 103:17, 107:9, 113:7, 138:6; Is 41:9, 61:10.

219 See Lk 2:41-52; Mk 3:31-35.

220 See Jn 2:4, 13:1.

221 Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 41.

222 Mk 3:35

223 See Acts 1:14, 2:1-4.

224 Pope John Paul II: *Address to the Cardinals and Prelates of the Roman Curia*, December 22 1987.

225 From a Responsory in the Office of Readings for the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God

## Appendix 1: Prayers to Our Lady and St. Joseph

Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
(Litany of Loreto)

Lord, have mercy.  
 Christ, have mercy.  
 Lord, have mercy.  
 Christ, hear us.  
 Christ, graciously hear us.  
 God the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.  
 God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.  
 God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.  
 Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.  
 Holy Mary, pray for us.  
 Holy Mother of God, pray for us.  
 Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for us.  
 Mother of Christ, pray for us.  
 Mother of the Church, pray for us.  
 Mother of divine grace, pray for us.  
 Mother most pure, pray for us.  
 Mother most chaste, pray for us.  
 Mother inviolate, pray for us.  
 Mother undefiled, pray for us.  
 Mother most amiable, pray for us.  
 Mother most admirable, pray for us.  
 Mother of good counsel, pray for us.  
 Mother of our Creator, pray for us.  
 Mother of our Savior, pray for us.  
 Virgin most prudent, pray for us.  
 Virgin most venerable, pray for us.  
 Virgin most renowned, pray for us.  
 Virgin most powerful, pray for us.  
 Virgin most merciful, pray for us.  
 Virgin most faithful, pray for us.  
 Mirror of justice, pray for us.  
 Seat of wisdom, pray for us.  
 Cause of our joy, pray for us.  
 Spiritual vessel, pray for us.  
 Vessel of honour, pray for us.  
 Singular vessel of devotion, pray for us.  
 Mystical rose, pray for us.  
 Tower of David, pray for us.  
 Tower of ivory, pray for us.  
 House of gold, pray for us.  
 Ark of the Covenant, pray for us.  
 Gate of Heaven, pray for us.  
 Morning star, pray for us.  
 Health of the sick, pray for us.  
 Refuge of sinners, pray for us.  
 Comforter of the afflicted, pray for us.  
 Help of Christians, pray for us.  
 Queen of Angels, pray for us.  
 Queen of Patriarchs, pray for us.  
 Queen of Prophets, pray for us.  
 Queen of Apostles, pray for us.  
 Queen of Martyrs, pray for us.

Queen of Confessors, pray for us.  
 Queen of Virgins, pray for us.  
 Queen of all Saints, pray for us.  
 Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us.  
 Queen assumed into Heaven, pray for us.  
 Queen of the most holy Rosary, pray for us.  
 Queen of Peace, pray for us.  
 Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord!  
 Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord!  
 Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
 Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.  
 Let us pray: Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, that we, Thy servants, may enjoy lasting health of mind and body, and, by the glorious intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, be delivered from present sorrow and enter into the joy of eternal happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;  
 my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;  
 for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant.  
 From this day, all generations will call me blessed:  
 the Almighty has done great things for me,  
 and holy is His Name.  
 He has mercy on those who fear Him  
 in every generation.  
 He has shown the strength of His arm;  
 he has scattered the proud in their conceit.  
 He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
 and has lifted up the lowly.  
 He has filled the hungry with good things,  
 and the rich he has sent away empty.  
 He has come to the help of his servant Israel,  
 for He has remembered His promise of mercy,  
 the promise He made to our fathers,  
 to Abraham and His children for ever.  
 Glory be to the Father,  
 and to the Son,  
 and to the Holy Spirit,  
 as it was in the beginning,  
 is now, and ever shall be,  
 world without end. Amen.

**The Rosary**

*The Rosary comprises five decades, each consisting of*

- the Lord's Prayer
- ten Hail Mary's
- the Glory Be

*However, it is usually preceded by*

- the Creed
- the Lord's Prayer
- three Hail Mary's
- the Glory Be

*and followed by*

- the Hail, Holy Queen

*while each decade is followed by a brief concluding prayer such as*

- "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins; save us from the fires of Hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy."

*During each decade, one meditates on one of the events in the life of Jesus and His mother, as follows:*

**The Five Joyful Mysteries**

*(Mondays, Saturdays, and Sundays of Advent and Christmas)*

- 1 the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38)
- 2 the Visitation (Lk 1:39-56)
- 3 the Nativity (Lk 2:1-20)
- 4 the Presentation (Lk 2:22-39)
- 5 the Finding in the Temple (Lk 3:41-51)

**The Five Luminous Mysteries**

*(Thursdays)*

- 1 the Baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:13-17)
- 2 the Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-11)
- 3 the Proclamation of the Kingdom  
(Mt 13, 19:16-30, 20:1-16)
- 4 the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-9)
- 5 the Institution of the Eucharist  
(Mt 26:26-29)

**The Five Sorrowful Mysteries**

*(Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays of Lent)*

- 1 the Agony in the Garden (Mk 14:32-42)
- 2 the Scourging at the Pillar (Mt 27:26)
- 3 the Crowning with Thorns (Mt 27:27-31)
- 4 the Carrying of the Cross (Lk 23:26-31)
- 5 the Crucifixion (Lk 23:32-49)

**The Five Glorious Mysteries**

*(Wednesdays and Sundays except the Sundays of Advent, Christmas, and Lent)*

- 1 the Resurrection (Jn 20:1-18)
- 2 the Ascension (Acts 1:1-14)
- 3 the Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-12)
- 4 the Assumption (see the talk on "Mary and Joseph")
- 5 the Coronation (see the talk on "Mary and Joseph")

*For more on the Rosary and how to pray it, see Appendix 3 and the Appendix to the talk on "Prayer."*

**Hail, Mary**

Hail, Mary, full of grace;  
the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, mother of God,  
pray for us sinners  
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**Hail, Holy Queen**

Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy:  
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.  
To thee do we cry,  
poor banished children of Eve;  
to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.  
Turn then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy toward us,  
and after this exile, show unto us  
the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary!  
Pray for us, O holy mother of God,  
that we may be made worthy of the  
promises of Christ.

**The Angelus**

*(traditionally said at 6:00 am, 12:00 pm,  
and 6:00 pm)*

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,  
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail, Mary,...

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:  
Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail, Mary,...

And the Word was made flesh, (*genuflect*)  
And dwelled among us.

Hail, Mary,...

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,  
That we may be made worthy of the  
promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O  
Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to  
whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son,  
was made known by the message of an  
angel, may by His Passion and Cross be  
brought to the glory of His Resurrection.  
Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.



**Queen of Heaven**

*(said during Eastertide instead of the  
Angelus and Salve Regina)*

Queen of Heaven, rejoice!

*Alleluia!*

For He Whom you merited to bear

*Alleluia!*

Has risen as He said!

*Alleluia!*

Pray for us to God!

*Alleluia!*

Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary!

*Alleluia!*

For the Lord is truly risen!

*Alleluia!*

Let us pray: O God, Who, by the Resurrection of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, have given joy to the whole world; grant, we beseech You, that, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His mother, we may attain the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Memorare**

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother! To thee I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but, in thy mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

**Prayer For a Happy Death**

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,  
I give you my heart and my soul.  
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,  
assist me in my last agony.  
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,  
may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you.

**Litany of St. Joseph**

Lord, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

God our Father in Heaven, have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.

Saint Joseph, pray for us.

Noble son of the House of David, pray for us.

Light of patriarchs, pray for us.

Husband of the Mother of God, pray for us.

Guardian of the Virgin, pray for us.

Legal father of the Son of God, pray for us.

Faithful guardian of Christ, pray for us.

Head of the Holy Family, pray for us.

Joseph, chaste and just, pray for us.

Joseph, prudent and brave, pray for us.

Joseph, obedient and loyal, pray for us.

Pattern of patience, pray for us.

Lover of poverty, pray for us.

Model of workers, pray for us.

Example to parents, pray for us.

Guardian of virgins, pray for us.

Pillar of family life, pray for us.

Comfort of the troubled, pray for us.

Hope of the sick, pray for us.

Patron of the dying, pray for us.

Terror of evil spirits, pray for us.

Protector of the Church, pray for us.

Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

God made him master of his household,

And put him in charge of all that he owned.

Let us pray: almighty God, in Your infinite wisdom and love, You chose Joseph to be the husband of Mary, the mother of Your Son. As we enjoy his protection on earth, may we have the help of his prayers in Heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Prayer to St. Joseph for the Church  
(Pope Leo XIII)**

To you, O blessed Joseph, we come in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you to the immaculate virgin mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by His Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from Heaven assist us in our struggle with the powers of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

**Prayer to St. Joseph for Workers  
(Pope St. John XXIII)**

O Saint Joseph, guardian of Jesus, chaste spouse of Mary, who passed your life in the perfect fulfilment of duty, sustaining the Holy Family of Nazareth with the labour of your hands, protect kindly us who trustingly turn to you.

You know our aspirations, our miseries, our hopes, and we have recourse to you because we know that we will find in you one who will understand and protect us. You too have known trial, labour, and weariness.

But even in the midst of the worries of the material life, your soul was filled with profound peace, and it exulted in unerring joy through intimacy with the Son of God entrusted to you, and with Mary, His most sweet mother.

May we whom you protect understand that we are not alone in our labour, but show us how to discover Jesus near us, to receive Him with grace, and to guard Him faithfully, as you have done.

And ensure that in every family, in every factory, in every workshop, wherever a Christian works, all may be satisfied in charity, in patience, in justice, in seeking to do well, so that abundant gifts may descend from heaven. Amen.

**Prayer to St. Joseph, Patron of Canada  
(Pope St. John Paul II, at St. Joseph's  
Oratory in Montréal)**

Saint Joseph: with you, for you, we bless the Lord. He chose you among all men to be the chaste spouse of Mary, the one who would remain at the threshold of the mystery of her divine maternity, and who, after her, would accept it in faith as the work of the Holy Spirit.

You gave to Jesus legal paternity in the line of David. You constantly watched over the Mother and the Child with an affectionate concern, in order to protect their lives and to allow them to accomplish their destiny.

The Saviour Jesus deigned to submit Himself to you, as to a father, throughout His childhood and adolescence and to receive from you an apprenticeship in human life, while you shared His life in the adoration of His mystery.

You remain at His side. Continue to protect the whole Church, the family born of the salvation of Jesus.

Protect especially the people of Canada, who have placed themselves under your patronage. Help them to come closer to the mystery of Christ in that attitude of faith, submission, and love that was your own.

See the spiritual and material needs of all those who beg your intercession, particularly families and those who are poor, in every sense; through you, they are certain to find Mary's maternal face and the hand of Jesus to assist them. Amen.

## Appendix 2

Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*

## On the Rosary of the Virgin Mary

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless saints and encouraged by the Magisterium.

Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to "set out into the deep" (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, "the way, and the truth, and the life," "the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn."<sup>(1)</sup>

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the depth of the Gospel message in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium.<sup>(2)</sup> It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial Magnificat for the work of the redemptive Incarnation, which began in her virginal womb.

With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the Face of Christ and to experience the depths of His love. Through the Rosary, the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the mother of the Redeemer.

**The Popes and the Rosary**

2. Numerous predecessors of mine attributed great importance to this prayer.

Worthy of special note in this regard is Pope Leo XIII, who on 1 September 1883 promulgated the Encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus Officio*,<sup>(3)</sup> a document of great worth, the first of his many statements about this prayer, in which he proposed the Rosary as an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society.

Among the more recent Popes who, from the time of the Second Vatican Council, have distinguished themselves in promoting the Rosary, I mention Blessed John XXIII<sup>(4)</sup> and above all Pope Paul VI, who in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* emphasized, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the Rosary's evangelical character and its Christocentric inspiration.

I myself have often encouraged the frequent recitation of the Rosary. From my youthful years, this prayer has held an important place in my spiritual life. I was powerfully reminded of this during my recent visit to Poland, and in particular at the Shrine of Kalwaria. The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort.

Twenty-four years ago, on 29 October 1978, scarcely two weeks after my election to the See of Peter, I frankly admitted: "The Rosary is my favourite prayer. A marvellous prayer! Marvellous in its simplicity and its depth.

"It can be said that the Rosary is, in some sense, a prayer-commentary on the final chapter of the Vatican II Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, a chapter which discusses the wondrous presence of the mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

"Against the background of the words *Ave Maria*, the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ pass before the eyes of the soul. They take shape in the complete

1 Jn 14:6

series of the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, and they put us in living communion with Jesus through — we might say — the heart of His mother.

"At the same time our heart can embrace in the decades of the Rosary all the events that make up the lives of individuals, families, nations, the Church, and all mankind: our personal concerns and those of our neighbour, especially those who are closest to us, who are dearest to us. Thus the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life."<sup>(5)</sup>

With these words, dear brothers and sisters, I set the first year of my pontificate within the daily rhythm of the Rosary. Today, as I begin the twenty-fifth year of my service as the successor of Peter, I wish to do the same.

How many graces have I received in these years from the Blessed Virgin through the Rosary: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!* ("My soul magnifies the Lord!") I wish to lift up my thanks to the Lord in the words of His most holy mother, under whose protection I have placed my Petrine ministry: *Totus Tuus!*

### October 2002 — October 2003: The Year of the Rosary

3. Therefore, in continuity with my reflection in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which, after the experience of the Jubilee, I invited the people of God to "start afresh from Christ,"<sup>(6)</sup> I have felt drawn to offer a reflection on the Rosary, as a kind of Marian complement to that Letter and an exhortation to contemplate the Face of Christ in union with, and at the school of, His most holy mother.

To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the Face of Christ.

As a way of highlighting this invitation, prompted by the forthcoming 120th anniversary of the aforementioned encyclical of Leo XIII, I desire that during the course of this year the Rosary should be especially emphasized and promoted in the various Christian communities. I therefore proclaim the year from October 2002 to October 2003 the Year of the Rosary.

I leave this pastoral proposal to the initiative of each ecclesial community. It is not my intention to encumber but rather to complete and consolidate the pastoral programs of the particular churches.

I am confident that the proposal will find a ready and generous reception. The Rosary, reclaimed in its full meaning, goes to the very heart of Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization.

I am pleased to reaffirm this also in the joyful remembrance of another anniversary: the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on October 11 1962, the "great grace" dispensed by the Spirit of God for the Church in our time.<sup>(7)</sup>

### Objections to the Rosary

4. The timeliness of this proposal is evident from a number of considerations.

First: the urgent need to counter a certain crisis of the Rosary, which in the present historical and theological context can risk being wrongly devalued, and therefore no longer taught to the younger generation.

There are some who think that the centrality of the Liturgy, rightly stressed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, necessarily entails giving lesser importance to the Rosary. Yet, as Pope Paul VI made clear, not only does this prayer not conflict with the Liturgy, [but also] it sustains it, since it serves as an excellent introduction and a faithful echo of the Liturgy, enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives.

Perhaps, too, there are some who fear that the Rosary is somehow unecumenical because of its distinctly Marian character. Yet the Rosary clearly belongs to the kind of veneration of the mother of God described by the Council: a devotion

directed to the Christological centre of the Christian faith, in such a way that "when the mother is honoured, the Son ... is duly known, loved, and glorified."<sup>(8)</sup> If properly revitalized, the Rosary is an aid and certainly not a hindrance to ecumenism!

#### **A path of contemplation**

5. But the most important reason for strongly encouraging the practice of the Rosary is that it represents a most effective means of fostering among the faithful that commitment to the contemplation of the Christian mystery which I have proposed in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* as a genuine "training in holiness": "What is needed is a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer."<sup>(9)</sup>

Inasmuch as contemporary culture, even amid so many indications to the contrary, has witnessed the flowering of a new call for spirituality, due also to the influence of other religions, it is more urgent than ever that our Christian communities should become "genuine schools of prayer."<sup>(10)</sup>

The Rosary belongs among the finest and most praiseworthy traditions of Christian contemplation. Developed in the West, it is a typically meditative prayer, corresponding in some way to the "prayer of the heart" or "Jesus prayer" which took root in the soil of the Christian East.

#### **Prayer for peace and for the family**

6. A number of historical circumstances also make a revival of the Rosary quite timely.

First of all, the need to implore from God the gift of peace. The Rosary has many times been proposed by my predecessors and myself as a prayer for peace. At the start of a millennium which began with the terrifying attacks of 11 September 2001, a millennium which witnesses every day in numerous parts of the world fresh scenes of bloodshed and violence, to rediscover the Rosary means to immerse oneself in contemplation of the mystery of Christ Who "is our peace," since He made "the two of us one, and broke down the dividing wall of hostility."<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, one cannot recite the Rosary without feeling caught up in a clear commitment to advancing peace, especially in the land of Jesus, still so sorely afflicted and so close to the heart of every Christian.

A similar need for commitment and prayer arises in relation to another critical contemporary issue: the family, the primary cell of society, increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration on both the ideological and the practical planes, so as to make us fear for the future of this fundamental and indispensable institution and, with it, for the future of society as a whole.

The revival of the Rosary in Christian families, within the context of a broader pastoral ministry to the family, will be an effective aid to countering the devastating effects of this crisis typical of our age.

#### **"Behold your mother!"<sup>3</sup>**

7. Many signs indicate that still today the Blessed Virgin desires to exercise through this same prayer that maternal concern to which the dying Redeemer entrusted, in the person of the beloved disciple, all the sons and daughters of the Church:

"Woman, behold your son!"<sup>4</sup>

Well known are the occasions in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries on which the mother of Christ made her presence felt and her voice heard, in order to exhort the People of God to this form of contemplative prayer.

I mention in particular, on account of their great influence on the lives of Christians and the authoritative recognition they have received from the Church, the apparitions of Lourdes and Fatima;<sup>(11)</sup> these shrines continue to be visited by great

<sup>2</sup> Eph 2:14

<sup>3</sup> Jn 19:27

numbers of pilgrims seeking comfort and hope.

#### **Following the witnesses**

8. It would be impossible to name all the many saints who discovered in the Rosary a genuine path to growth in holiness.

We need but mention Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, the author of an excellent work on the Rosary,(12) and, closer to ourselves, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, whom I recently had the joy of canonizing.

As a true apostle of the Rosary, Blessed Bartolo Longo had a special charism. His path to holiness rested on an inspiration heard in the depths of his heart: "Whoever spreads the Rosary is saved!"(13)

As a result, he felt called to build a church dedicated to Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Pompei, against the background of the ruins of the ancient city, which [had] scarcely heard the proclamation of Christ before being buried in 79 AD during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, only to emerge centuries later from its ashes as a witness to the lights and shadows of classical civilization.

By his whole life's work and especially by the practice of the "Fifteen Saturdays," Bartolo Longo promoted the Christocentric and contemplative heart of the Rosary, and received great encouragement and support from Leo XIII, the "Pope of the Rosary."

## **CHAPTER I: CONTEMPLATING CHRIST WITH MARY**

### **A face radiant as the sun**

9. "And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun."<sup>5</sup>

The Gospel scene of Christ's transfiguration, in which the three apostles Peter, James, and John appear entranced by the beauty of the Redeemer, can be seen as an icon of Christian contemplation.

To look upon the Face of Christ, to recognize Its mystery amid the daily events and the sufferings of His human life, and then to grasp the divine splendour definitively revealed in the risen Lord, seated in glory at the right hand of the Father: this is the task of every follower of Christ and therefore the task of each one of us.

In contemplating Christ's Face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life, experiencing ever anew the love of the Father and delighting in the joy of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul's words can then be applied to us: "Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed into His likeness, from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

### **Mary, model of contemplation**

10. The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary.

In a unique way, the Face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the Face of Christ as faithfully as Mary.

The eyes of her heart already turned to Him at the Annunciation, when she conceived Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed she began to sense His presence and to picture His features. When at last she gave birth to Him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the Face of her Son, as she "wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger."<sup>7</sup>

Thereafter Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave Him. At times it would be a questioning look, as in the episode of the finding in

4 Jn 19:26

5 Mt 17:2

6 2 Cor 3:18

7 Lk 2:7

the Temple: "Son, why have you treated us so?"<sup>8</sup>; it would always be a penetrating gaze, one capable of deeply understanding Jesus, even to the point of perceiving His hidden feelings and anticipating His decisions, as at Cana.<sup>9</sup> At other times it would be a look of sorrow, especially beneath the cross, where her vision would still be that of a mother giving birth, for Mary not only shared the passion and death of her Son: she also received the new son given to her in the beloved disciple.<sup>10</sup> On the morning of Easter hers would be a gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection, and finally, on the day of Pentecost, a gaze afire with the outpouring of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup>

### Mary's memories

11. Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ, treasuring His every word: "She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart."<sup>12</sup>

The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way, those memories were to be the "rosary" which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life.

Even now, amid the joyful songs of the heavenly Jerusalem, the reasons for her thanksgiving and praise remain unchanged. They inspire her maternal concern for the pilgrim Church, in which she continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel.

Mary constantly sets before the faithful the "mysteries" of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power. In the recitation of the Rosary, the Christian community enters into contact with the memories and the contemplative gaze of Mary.

### The Rosary, a contemplative prayer

12. The Rosary, precisely because it starts with Mary's own experience, is an exquisitely contemplative prayer. Without this contemplative dimension, it would lose its meaning, as Pope Paul VI clearly pointed out:

"Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas, in violation of the admonition of Christ: 'In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words.'<sup>13</sup> By its nature, the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are disclosed."<sup>(14)</sup>

It is worth pausing to consider this profound insight of Paul VI, in order to bring out certain aspects of the Rosary which show that it is really a form of Christocentric contemplation.

### Remembering Christ with Mary

13. Mary's contemplation is above all a remembering.

We need to understand this word in the biblical sense of remembrance (*zakar*), as a making present of the works brought about by God in the history of salvation.

The Bible is an account of saving events culminating in Christ Himself. These events not only belong to "yesterday"; they are also part of the "today" of salvation.

This making present comes about above all in the Liturgy: what God accomplished centuries ago did not only affect the direct witnesses of those events;

8 Lk 2:48

9 see Jn 2:5

10 See Jn 19:26-27.

11 See Acts 1:14.

12 Lk 2:19; see 2:51

13 Mt 6:7

it continues to affect people in every age with its gift of grace.

To some extent this is also true of every other devout approach to those events: to "remember" them in a spirit of faith and love is to be open to the grace which Christ won for us by the mysteries of His life, death, and Resurrection.

Consequently, while it must be reaffirmed with the Second Vatican Council that the Liturgy, as the exercise of the priestly office of Christ and an act of public worship, is "the summit to which the activity of the Church is directed and the font from which all its power flows,"<sup>15</sup> it is also necessary to recall that the spiritual life "is not limited solely to participation in the Liturgy. Christians, while they are called to prayer in common, must also go to their own rooms to pray to their Father in secret;<sup>14</sup> indeed, according to the teaching of the Apostle, they must pray without ceasing."<sup>15</sup> (16)

The Rosary, in its own particular way, is part of this varied panorama of "ceaseless" prayer. If the Liturgy, as the activity of Christ and the Church, is a saving action *par excellence*, the Rosary too, as a "meditation" with Mary on Christ, is a salutary contemplation. By immersing us in the mysteries of the Redeemer's life, it ensures that what He has done and what the Liturgy makes present is profoundly assimilated and shapes our existence.

### Learning Christ from Mary

14. Christ is the supreme Teacher, the Revealer and the One revealed. It is not just a question of learning what He taught, but of "learning Him."

In this regard, could we have any better teacher than Mary? From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior Teacher Who leads us to the full truth of Christ.<sup>16</sup> But among creatures, no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of His mystery better than His mother.

The first of the "signs" worked by Jesus — the changing of water into wine at the marriage in Cana — clearly presents Mary in the guise of a teacher, as she urges the servants to do what Jesus commands.<sup>17</sup> We can imagine that she would have done likewise for the disciples after Jesus' Ascension, when she joined them in awaiting the Holy Spirit and supported them in their first mission.

Contemplating the scenes of the Rosary in union with Mary is a way of learning from her to "read" Christ, to discover His secrets and to understand His message.

This school of Mary is all the more effective if we consider that she teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own "pilgrimage of faith."<sup>17</sup> As we contemplate each mystery of her Son's life, she invites us to do as she did at the Annunciation: to ask humbly the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word."<sup>18</sup>

### Being conformed to Christ with Mary

15. Christian spirituality is distinguished by the disciple's commitment to become conformed ever more fully to his Master.<sup>19</sup>

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism grafts the believer like a branch onto the Vine which is Christ<sup>20</sup> and makes him a member of Christ's Mystical Body.<sup>21</sup> This initial unity, however, calls for a growing assimilation which will increasingly shape the conduct of the disciple in accordance with the "mind" of Christ: "Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus."<sup>22</sup> In the

14 See Mt 6:6.

15 See 1 Thes 5:17.

16 See Jn 14:26, 15:26, 16:13.

17 See Jn 2:5.

18 Lk 1:38

19 See Rom 8:29; Ph11 3:10,12.

20 See Jn 15:5.

21 See 1 Cor 12:12; Rom 12:5.

22 Ph11 2:5



words of the Apostle, we are called "to put on the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>23</sup>

In the spiritual journey of the Rosary, based on the constant contemplation — in Mary's company — of the Face of Christ, this demanding ideal of being conformed to Him is pursued through an association which could be described in terms of friendship. We are thereby enabled to enter naturally into Christ's life and, as it were, to share His deepest feelings.

In this regard Blessed Bartolo Longo has written: "Just as two friends, frequently in each other's company, tend to develop similar habits, so too, by holding familiar converse with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary and by living the same life in Holy Communion, we can become, to the extent of our lowliness, similar to them and can learn from these supreme models a life of humility, poverty, hiddenness, patience, and perfection."<sup>(18)</sup>

In this process of being conformed to Christ in the Rosary, we entrust ourselves in a special way to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin. She who is both the mother of Christ and a member of the Church, indeed her "pre-eminent and altogether singular member,"<sup>(19)</sup> is at the same time the "mother of the Church." As such, she continually brings to birth children for the Mystical Body of her Son. She does so through her intercession, imploring upon them the inexhaustible outpouring of the Spirit. Mary is the perfect icon of the motherhood of the Church.

The Rosary mystically transports us to Mary's side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home of Nazareth. This enables her to train us and to mold us with the same care, until Christ is "fully formed" in us.<sup>24</sup>

This role of Mary, totally grounded in that of Christ and radically subordinated to it, "in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power."<sup>(20)</sup> This is the luminous principle expressed by the Second Vatican Council which I have so powerfully experienced in my own life and have made the basis of my episcopal motto: *Totus Tuus*.<sup>(21)</sup>

The motto is, of course, inspired by the teaching of Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, who explained in the following words Mary's role in the process of our configuration to Christ: "Our entire perfection consists in being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus Christ. Hence the most perfect of all devotions is undoubtedly that which conforms, unites, and consecrates us most perfectly to Jesus Christ. Now, since Mary is of all creatures the one most conformed to Jesus Christ, it follows that among all devotions, that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary, His holy mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to her the more will it be consecrated to Jesus Christ."<sup>(22)</sup>

Never as in the Rosary do the life of Jesus and that of Mary appear so deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ!

### Praying to Christ with Mary

16. Jesus invited us to turn to God with insistence and the confidence that we will be heard: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."<sup>25</sup>

The basis for this power of prayer is the goodness of the Father, but also the mediation of Christ Himself<sup>26</sup> and the working of the Holy Spirit, Who "intercedes for us" according to the will of God.<sup>27</sup> For "we do not know how to pray as we ought,"<sup>28</sup> and at times we are not heard "because we ask wrongly."<sup>29</sup>

In support of the prayer which Christ and the Spirit cause to rise in our hearts, Mary intervenes with her maternal intercession. "The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary."<sup>(23)</sup>

23 See Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27.

24 See Gal 4:19.

25 Mt 7:7

26 See 1 Jn 2:1.

27 See Rom 8:26-27.

28 Rom 8:26

29 See Jas 4:2-3.

If Jesus, the one Mediator, is the Way of our prayer, then Mary, His purest and most transparent reflection, shows us the Way.

"Beginning with Mary's unique co-operation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the churches developed their prayer to the holy mother of God, centering it on the Person of Christ manifested in His mysteries."<sup>(24)</sup> At the wedding of Cana, the Gospel clearly shows the power of Mary's intercession as she makes known to Jesus the needs of others: "They have no wine."<sup>30</sup>

The Rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the Heart of her Son. She is "all-powerful by grace," to use the bold expression, which needs to be properly understood, of Blessed Bartolo Longo in his *Supplication to Our Lady*.<sup>(25)</sup>

This is a conviction which, beginning with the Gospel, has grown ever more firm in the experience of the Christian people. The supreme poet Dante expresses it marvellously in the lines sung by Saint Bernard: "Lady, thou art so great and so powerful, that whoever desires grace, yet does not turn to thee, would have his desire fly without wings."<sup>(26)</sup>

When in the Rosary we plead with Mary, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit,<sup>31</sup> she intercedes for us before the Father, Who filled her with grace, and before the Son born of her womb, praying with us and for us.

### Proclaiming Christ with Mary

17. The Rosary is also a path of proclamation and increasing knowledge, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again at different levels of the Christian experience.

Its form is that of a prayerful and contemplative presentation, capable of forming Christians according to the Heart of Christ. When the recitation of the Rosary combines all the elements needed for an effective meditation, especially in its communal celebration in parishes and shrines, it can present a significant catechetical opportunity which pastors should use to advantage. In this way, too, our Lady of the Rosary continues her work of proclaiming Christ.

The history of the Rosary shows how this prayer was used in particular by the Dominicans at a time difficult for the Church because of the spread of heresy. Today we are facing new challenges. Why should we not once more have recourse to the Rosary, with the same faith as those who have gone before us? The Rosary retains all its power and continues to be a valuable pastoral resource for every good evangelizer.

## CHAPTER II: MYSTERIES OF CHRIST — MYSTERIES OF HIS MOTHER

### The Rosary, "a compendium of the Gospel"

18. The only way to approach the contemplation of Christ's Face is by listening in the Spirit to the Father's voice, since "no one knows the Son except the Father."<sup>32</sup>

In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus responded to Peter's confession of faith by indicating the source of that clear intuition of His identity: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in Heaven."<sup>33</sup>

What is needed, then, is a revelation from above. In order to receive that revelation, attentive listening is indispensable: "Only the experience of silence and prayer offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful, and consistent knowledge of that mystery."<sup>(27)</sup>

30 Jn 2:3

31 See Lk 1:35.

32 Mt 11:27

33 Mt 16:17

The Rosary is one of the traditional paths of Christian prayer directed to the contemplation of Christ's Face.

Pope Paul VI described it in these words: "As a Gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact — the litany-like succession of Hail Mary's — becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, Who is the ultimate object both of the angel's announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist: 'Blessed is the Fruit of your womb.'<sup>34</sup> We would go further and say that the succession of Hail Mary's constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus Whom the succession of mysteries proposes to us now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin."<sup>(28)</sup>

#### A proposed addition to the traditional pattern

19. Of the many mysteries of Christ's life, only a few are indicated by the Rosary in the form that has become generally established with the seal of the Church's approval. The selection was determined by the origin of the prayer, which was based on the number 150, the number of the Psalms in the Psalter.

I believe, however, that to bring out fully the Christological depth of the Rosary it would be suitable to make an addition to the traditional pattern which, while left to the freedom of individuals and communities, could broaden it to include the mysteries of Christ's public ministry between His Baptism and His Passion. In the course of those mysteries, we contemplate important aspects of the Person of Christ as the definitive revelation of God.

Declared the beloved Son of the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan, Christ is the One Who announces the coming of the Kingdom, bears witness to it in His works, and proclaims its demands. It is during the years of His public ministry that the mystery of Christ is most evidently a mystery of light: "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."<sup>35</sup>

Consequently, for the Rosary to become more fully a "compendium of the Gospel," it is fitting to add, following reflection on the Incarnation and the hidden life of Christ (the "joyful mysteries") and before focussing on the sufferings of His Passion (the "sorrowful mysteries") and the triumph of His Resurrection (the "glorious mysteries"), a meditation on certain particularly significant moments in His public ministry (the "mysteries of light").

This addition of these new mysteries, without prejudice to any essential aspect of the prayer's traditional format, is meant to give it fresh life and to enkindle renewed interest in the Rosary's place within Christian spirituality as a true doorway to the depths of the Heart of Christ, ocean of joy and of light, of suffering, and of glory.

#### The Joyful Mysteries

20. The first five decades, the "joyful mysteries," are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation.

This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Gabriel's greeting to the Virgin of Nazareth is linked to an invitation to messianic joy: "Rejoice, Mary." The whole of salvation history — in a sense, the entire history of the world — has led up to this greeting. If it is the Father's plan to unite all things in Christ,<sup>36</sup> then the whole of the universe is in some way touched by the divine favour with which the Father looks upon Mary and makes her the mother of His Son. The whole of humanity, in turn, is embraced by the *fiat* with which she readily agrees to the will of God.

Exultation is the keynote of the encounter with Elizabeth, where the sound of

34 Lk 1:42

35 Jn 9:5

36 See Eph 1:10.

Mary's voice and the presence of Christ in her womb cause John to "leap for joy."<sup>37</sup>

Gladness also fills the scene in Bethlehem, when the birth of the divine Child, the Saviour of the world, is announced by the song of the angels and proclaimed to the shepherds as "news of great joy."<sup>38</sup>

The final two mysteries, while preserving this climate of joy, already point to the drama yet to come.

The Presentation in the Temple not only expresses the joy of the Child's consecration and the ecstasy of the aged Simeon; it also records the prophecy that Christ will be a "sign of contradiction" for Israel and that a sword will pierce His mother's heart.<sup>39</sup>

Joy mixed with drama marks the fifth mystery, the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. Here He appears in His divine wisdom as He listens and raises questions — already, in effect, One Who "teaches." The revelation of His mystery as the Son wholly dedicated to His Father's affairs proclaims the radical nature of the Gospel, in which even the closest of human relationships are challenged by the absolute demands of the Kingdom. Mary and Joseph, fearful and anxious, "did not understand" His words.<sup>40</sup>

To meditate upon the "joyful" mysteries, then, is to enter into the ultimate causes and the deepest meaning of Christian joy. It is to focus on the reality of the mystery of the Incarnation and on the obscure foreshadowing of the mystery of the saving Passion. Mary leads us to discover the secret of Christian joy, reminding us that Christianity is, first and foremost, *evangelion*, "good news," which has as its heart and its whole content the Person of Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, the one Saviour of the world.

### The Mysteries of Light

21. Moving on from the infancy and the hidden life in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus, our contemplation brings us to those mysteries which may be called in a special way "mysteries of light."

Certainly the whole mystery of Christ is a mystery of light. He is the "light of the world."<sup>41</sup> Yet this truth emerges in a special way during the years of His public life, when He proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom.

In proposing to the Christian community five significant moments — "luminous" mysteries — during this phase of Christ's life, I think that the following can be fittingly singled out: (1) His Baptism in the Jordan, (2) His Self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana, (3) His proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with His call to conversion, (4) His Transfiguration, and finally, (5) His institution of the Eucharist, as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

Each of these mysteries is a revelation of the Kingdom now present in the very Person of Jesus.

The Baptism in the Jordan is the first mystery of light. Here, as Christ descends into the waters — the innocent One Who became "sin" for our sake<sup>42</sup> — the heavens open wide and the Voice of the Father declares Him the beloved Son,<sup>43</sup> while the Spirit descends on Him to invest Him with the mission that He is to carry out.

Another mystery of light is the first of Christ's signs, given at Cana,<sup>44</sup> when He changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith — thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers.

37 See Lk 1:44.

38 Lk 2:10

39 See Lk 2:34-35.

40 Lk 2:50

41 Jn 8:12

42 See 2 Cor 5:21.

43 See Mt 3:17 and parallels.

44 See Jn 2:1-12.

Another mystery of light is the preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls people to conversion,<sup>4 5</sup> and forgives the sins of all who draw near to Him in humble trust:<sup>4 6</sup> the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which He continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which He has entrusted to His Church.<sup>4 7</sup>

The mystery of light *par excellence* is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the Face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished apostles to "listen to Him"<sup>4 8</sup> and to prepare to experience with Him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with Him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit.

A final mystery of light is the institution of the Eucharist, in which Christ offers His Body and Blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies "to the end" [to] His love for humanity,<sup>4 9</sup> for whose salvation He will offer Himself in sacrifice.

In these mysteries, apart from the miracle at Cana, the presence of Mary remains in the background. The Gospels make only the briefest reference to her occasional presence at one moment or other during the preaching of Jesus,<sup>5 0</sup> and they give no indication that she was present at the Last Supper or the institution of the Eucharist.

Yet the role she assumed at Cana in some way accompanies Christ throughout His ministry. The revelation made directly by the Father at the Baptism in the Jordan and echoed by John the Baptist is placed upon Mary's lips at Cana, and it becomes the great maternal counsel which Mary addresses to the Church of every age: "Do whatever He tells you."<sup>5 1</sup> This counsel is a fitting introduction to the words and signs of Christ's public ministry and it forms the Marian foundation of all the "mysteries of light."

### The Sorrowful Mysteries

22. The Gospels give great prominence to the sorrowful mysteries of Christ. From the beginning, pious Christians — especially during the Lenten devotion of the Way of the Cross — have focussed on the individual moments of the Passion, realizing that here is found the culmination of the revelation of God's love and the source of our salvation. The Rosary selects certain moments from the Passion, inviting the faithful to contemplate them in their hearts and to relive them.

The sequence of meditations begins with Gethsemane, where Christ experiences a moment of great anguish before the will of the Father, against which the weakness of the flesh would be tempted to rebel. There Jesus encounters all the temptations and confronts all the sins of humanity, in order to say to the Father: "Not My will, but Yours, be done."<sup>5 2</sup> This "Yes" of Christ reverses the "No" of our first parents in the Garden of Eden.

And the cost of this faithfulness to the Father's will is made clear in the following mysteries. By His scourging, His crowning with thorns, His carrying the cross, and His death on the cross, the Lord is cast into the most abject suffering: *Ecce homo!* ("Behold the Man!")

This abject suffering reveals not only the love of God, but also the meaning of man himself. *Ecce homo*: the meaning, origin, and fulfilment of man is to be found in Christ, the God Who humbles Himself out of love "even unto death, death on a cross."<sup>5 3</sup>

45 See Mk 1:15.

46 See Mk 2:3-13; Lk 7:47-48.

47 See Jn 20:22-23.

48 See Lk 9:35 and parallels.

49 Jn 13:1

50 See Mk 3:31-5; Jn 2:12.

51 Jn 2:5

52 Lk 22:42 and parallels

53 Phil 2:8

The sorrowful mysteries help the believer to relive the death of Jesus, to stand at the foot of the cross beside Mary, to enter with her into the depths of God's love for man, and to experience all its life-giving power.

### The Glorious Mysteries

23. "The contemplation of Christ's Face cannot stop at the image of the crucified One. He is the risen One!"(29)

The Rosary has always expressed this knowledge, born of faith, and invited the believer to pass beyond the darkness of the Passion in order to gaze upon Christ's glory in the Resurrection and Ascension.

Contemplating the risen One, Christians rediscover the reasons for their own faith<sup>54</sup> and relive the joy not only of those to whom Christ appeared — the Apostles, Mary Magdalene, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus — but also the joy of Mary, who must have had an equally intense experience of the new life of her glorified Son.

In the Ascension, Christ was raised in glory to the right hand of the Father, while Mary herself was raised to that same glory in the Assumption, enjoying beforehand, by a unique privilege, the destiny reserved for all the just at the resurrection of the dead.

Crowned in glory — as she appears in the last glorious mystery — Mary shines forth as Queen of the Angels and saints, the anticipation and the supreme realization of the eschatological state of the Church.

At the centre of this unfolding sequence of the glory of the Son and the mother, the Rosary sets before us the third glorious mystery, Pentecost, which reveals the face of the Church as a family gathered together with Mary, enlivened by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit, and ready for the mission of evangelization. The contemplation of this scene, like that of the other glorious mysteries, ought to lead the faithful to an ever greater appreciation of their new life in Christ, lived in the heart of the Church, a life of which the scene of Pentecost itself is the great "icon."

The glorious mysteries thus lead the faithful to greater hope for the eschatological goal toward which they journey as members of the pilgrim People of God in history. This can only impel them to bear courageous witness to that "good news" which gives meaning to their entire existence.

### From "mysteries" to the "Mystery": Mary's way

24. The cycles of meditation proposed by the Holy Rosary are by no means exhaustive, but they do bring to mind what is essential and they awaken in the soul a thirst for a knowledge of Christ continuously nourished by the pure source of the Gospel.

Every individual event in the life of Christ, as narrated by the evangelists, is resplendent with the mystery that surpasses all understanding:<sup>55</sup> the mystery of the Word made Flesh, in Whom "all the fullness of God dwells bodily."<sup>56</sup>

For this reason the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* places great emphasis on the mysteries of Christ, pointing out that "everything in the life of Jesus is a sign of His mystery."<sup>(30)</sup> The "*duc in altum*" ("setting out on to the deep") of the Church of the third millennium will be determined by the ability of Christians to enter into the "perfect knowledge of God's mystery — of Christ, in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."<sup>57</sup>

The Letter to the Ephesians makes this heartfelt prayer for all the baptized: "May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, so that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power ... to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."<sup>58</sup>

54 See 1 Cor 15:14.

55 See Eph 3:19.

56 Col 2:9

57 Col 2:2-3

58 3:17-19

The Rosary is at the service of this ideal; it offers the "secret" which leads easily to a profound and inward knowledge of Christ. We might call it Mary's way. It is the way of the example of the Virgin of Nazareth, a woman of faith, of silence, of attentive listening. It is also the way of a Marian devotion inspired by knowledge of the inseparable bond between Christ and His blessed mother: the mysteries of Christ are also, in a sense, the mysteries of His mother, even when they do not involve her directly, for she lives from Him and through Him.

By making our own the words of the Angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth contained in the Hail Mary, we find ourselves constantly drawn to seek out afresh in Mary — in her arms and in her heart — the "blessed Fruit of her womb."<sup>59</sup>

### **Mystery of Christ, mystery of man**

25. In my testimony of 1978 mentioned above, where I described the Rosary as my favourite prayer, I used an idea to which I would like to return. I said then that "the simple prayer of the Rosary marks the rhythm of human life."<sup>(31)</sup>

In the light of what has been said so far on the mysteries of Christ, it is not difficult to go deeper into this anthropological significance of the Rosary, which is far deeper than may appear at first sight.

Anyone who contemplates Christ through the various stages of His life cannot fail to perceive in Him the truth about man. This is the great affirmation of the Second Vatican Council, which I have so often discussed in my own teaching since the Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*: "it is only in the mystery of the Word made Flesh that the mystery of man is seen in its true light."<sup>(32)</sup>

The Rosary helps to open up the way to this light. Following in the path of Christ, in Whom man's path is "recapitulated,"<sup>(33)</sup> revealed, and redeemed, believers come face to face with the image of the true man.

Contemplating Christ's birth, they learn of the sanctity of life; seeing the household of Nazareth, they learn the original truth of the family according to God's plan; listening to the Master in the mysteries of His public ministry, they find the light which leads them to enter the Kingdom of God; and following Him on the way to Calvary, they learn the meaning of salvific suffering. Finally, contemplating Christ and His blessed mother in glory, they see the goal toward which each of us is called, if we allow ourselves to be healed and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

It could be said that each mystery of the Rosary, carefully meditated on, sheds light on the mystery of man. At the same time, it becomes natural to bring to this encounter with the sacred humanity of the Redeemer all the problems, anxieties, labours, and endeavours which go to make up our lives. "Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you."<sup>60</sup> To pray the Rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and His mother.

Twenty-five years later, thinking back over the difficulties which have also been part of my exercise of the Petrine ministry, I feel the need to say once more — as a warm invitation to everyone to experience it personally — that the Rosary does indeed "mark the rhythm of human life," bringing it into harmony with the "rhythm" of God's own life, in the joyful communion of the Holy Trinity, our life's destiny and deepest longing.

## **CHAPTER III: "FOR ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST"**

### **The Rosary, a way of assimilating the mystery**

26. Meditation on the mysteries of Christ is proposed in the Rosary by means of a method designed to assist in their assimilation. It is a method based on repetition. This applies above all to the Hail Mary, repeated ten times in each mystery.

<sup>59</sup> See Lk 1:42.

<sup>60</sup> Ps 55:23

If this repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temptation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise. It is quite another thing, however, when the Rosary is thought of as an outpouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the Person loved, with expressions similar in their content, but ever fresh in the feeling pervading them.

In Christ, God has truly assumed a "Heart of flesh." Not only does God have a divine Heart, rich in mercy and in forgiveness, but also a human Heart, capable of all the stirrings of affection.

If we needed evidence for this from the Gospel, we could easily find it in the touching dialogue between Christ and Peter after the Resurrection: "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Three times this question is put to Peter, and three times he gives the reply: "Lord, you know that I love You."<sup>61</sup> Over and above the specific meaning of this passage, so important for Peter's mission, none can fail to recognize the beauty of this triple repetition, in which the insistent request and the corresponding reply are expressed in terms familiar from the universal experience of human love.

To understand the Rosary, one has to enter into the psychological dynamic proper to love.

One thing is clear: although the repeated Hail Mary is addressed directly to Mary, it is to Jesus that the act of love is ultimately directed, with her and through her. The repetition is nourished by the desire to be conformed ever more completely to Christ, the true program of the Christian life.

Saint Paul expressed this project with words of fire: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."<sup>62</sup> And again: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."<sup>63</sup> The Rosary helps us to be conformed ever more closely to Christ until we attain true holiness.

#### **A valid method ...**

27. We should not be surprised that our relationship with Christ makes use of a method. In communicating Himself to us, God respects our human nature and its vital rhythms. Hence, while Christian spirituality is familiar with the most sublime forms of mystical silence in which images, words, and gestures are all, so to speak, superseded by an intense and ineffable union with God, it normally engages the whole person in all his complex psychological, physical, and relational reality.

This becomes apparent in the Liturgy. Sacraments and sacramentals are structured as a series of rites which bring into play all the dimensions of the person.

The same applies to non-liturgical prayer. This is confirmed by the fact that, in the East, the most characteristic prayer of Christological meditation, centered on the words "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,"<sup>(34)</sup> is traditionally linked to the rhythm of breathing. While this practice favours perseverance in the prayer, it also in some way embodies the desire for Christ to become the breath, the soul, and the "all" of one's life.

#### **... which can nevertheless be improved**

28. I mentioned in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* that the West is now experiencing a renewed demand for meditation, which at times leads to a keen interest in aspects of other religions.<sup>(35)</sup>

Some Christians, limited in their knowledge of the Christian contemplative tradition, are attracted by those forms of prayer. While the latter contain many elements which are positive and at times compatible with Christian experience, they are often based on ultimately unacceptable premises. Much in vogue among these approaches are methods aimed at attaining a high level of spiritual concentration by using techniques of a psychophysical, repetitive, and symbolic nature.

61 See Jn 21:15-17.

62 Phil 1:21

63 Gal 2:20



The Rosary is situated within this broad gamut of religious phenomena, but it is distinguished by characteristics of its own which correspond to specifically Christian requirements. In effect, the Rosary is simply a method of contemplation. As a method, it serves as a means to an end and cannot become an end in itself.

All the same, as the fruit of centuries of experience, this method should not be undervalued. In its favour one could cite the experience of countless saints.

This is not to say, however, that the method cannot be improved. Such is the intent of the addition of the new series of *mysteria lucis* ("mysteries of light") to the overall cycle of mysteries and of the few suggestions which I am proposing in this Letter regarding its manner of recitation.

These suggestions, while respecting the well established structure of this prayer, are intended to help the faithful to understand it in the richness of its symbolism and its harmony with the demands of daily life. Otherwise there is a risk not only that the Rosary will fail to produce the intended spiritual effects, but even that the beads, with which it is usually said, will come to be regarded as some kind of amulet or magic object, thereby radically distorting their meaning and function.

### Announcing each mystery

29. Announcing each mystery, and perhaps even using a suitable icon to portray it, is, as it were, to open up a scenario on which to focus our attention.

The words direct the imagination and the mind toward a particular episode or moment in the life of Christ. In the Church's traditional spirituality, the veneration of icons and the many devotions appealing to the senses, as well as the method of prayer proposed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises, make use of visual and imaginative elements (the *compositio loci*), judged to be of great help in concentrating the mind on the particular mystery.

This is a methodology, moreover, which corresponds to the inner logic of the Incarnation: in Jesus, God wanted to take on human features. It is through His bodily reality that we are led into contact with the mystery of His divinity.

This concreteness finds further expression in the announcement of the various mysteries of the Rosary.

Obviously, these mysteries neither replace the Gospel nor exhaust its content. The Rosary, therefore, is no substitute for *lectio divina* (the reading of the Scriptures); on the contrary, it presupposes and promotes it.

The mysteries contemplated in the Rosary — even with the addition of the *mysteria lucis* — do no more than outline the fundamental elements of the life of Christ, but they easily draw the mind to a more expansive reflection on the rest of the Gospel, especially when the Rosary is prayed in a setting of prolonged recollection.

### Listening to the word of God

30. In order to give a biblical foundation and greater depth to our meditation, it is helpful to follow the announcement of the mystery with the proclamation of a related biblical passage, long or short depending on the circumstances. No other words can ever match the inspired word in efficacy. As we listen, we are certain that this is the word of God, spoken for today and spoken "for me."

If received in this way, the word of God can become part of the Rosary's methodology of repetition without giving rise to the *ennui* ("boredom") derived from the simple recollection of something already well known.

It is not a matter of recalling information, but of allowing God to speak. In certain solemn communal celebrations, this word can be appropriately illustrated by a brief commentary.

### Silence

31. Listening and meditation are nourished by silence. After the announcement of the mystery and the proclamation of the word, it is fitting to pause and focus one's

attention for a suitable period of time on the mystery concerned, before moving into vocal prayer.

A discovery of the importance of silence is one of the secrets of practising contemplation and meditation. One drawback of a society dominated by technology and the mass media is the fact that silence becomes increasingly difficult to achieve. Just as moments of silence are recommended in the Liturgy, so too, in the recitation of the Rosary, it is fitting to pause briefly after listening to the word of God, while the mind focusses on the content of a particular mystery.

### The "Our Father"

32. After listening to the word and focussing on the mystery, we find it natural for the mind to be lifted up toward the Father.

In each of His mysteries, Jesus leads us to the Father, for as He rests in the Father's bosom<sup>64</sup> He is always turned toward Him. He wants us to share in His intimacy with the Father, so that we can say with Him: "Abba, Father."<sup>65</sup> By virtue of His relationship to the Father, He makes us brothers and sisters of Himself and of one another, communicating to us the Spirit Which is both His and the Father's.

Acting as a kind of foundation for the Christological and Marian meditation which unfolds in the repetition of the Hail Mary, the Our Father makes meditation upon the mystery, even when carried out in solitude, an ecclesial ("Church") experience.

### The ten "Hail Mary's"

33. This is the most substantial element in the Rosary and also the one that makes it a Marian prayer *par excellence*. Yet when the Hail Mary is properly understood, we come to see clearly that its Marian character is not opposed to its Christological character, but that it actually emphasizes and increases it.

The first part of the Hail Mary, drawn from the words spoken to Mary by the Angel Gabriel and by Saint Elizabeth, is a contemplation in adoration of the mystery accomplished in the Virgin of Nazareth.

These words express, so to speak, the wonder of Heaven and earth; they could be said to give us a glimpse of God's own wonderment as He contemplates His "masterpiece" — the Incarnation of the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary. If we recall how, in the Book of Genesis, God "saw all that He had made,"<sup>66</sup> we can find here an echo of that "pathos"<sup>67</sup> with which God, at the dawn of creation, looked upon the work of His hands."<sup>68</sup>(36)

The repetition of the Hail Mary in the Rosary gives us a share in God's own wonder and pleasure: in jubilant amazement we acknowledge the greatest miracle of history. Mary's prophecy here finds its fulfilment: "Henceforth all generations will call me blessed."<sup>68</sup>

The centre of gravity in the Hail Mary — the hinge, as it were, which joins its two parts — is the name of Jesus. Sometimes, in hurried recitation, this centre of gravity can be overlooked, and with it the connection to the mystery of Christ being contemplated. Yet it is precisely the emphasis given to the name of Jesus and to His mystery that is the sign of a meaningful and fruitful recitation of the Rosary.

Pope Paul VI drew attention, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, to the custom in certain regions of highlighting the name of Christ by the addition of a clause referring to the mystery being contemplated.<sup>(37)</sup> This is a praiseworthy custom, especially during public recitation. It gives forceful expression to our faith in Christ, directed to the different moments of the Redeemer's life. It is both a profession of faith and an aid in concentrating our meditation, since it facilitates the

64 See Jn 1:18.

65 Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6

66 Gen 1:31

67 Here the meaning is "strong feeling." The Pope called it "joy" in *Dies Domini*, 18.

68 Lk 1:48. Here the meaning is "blest," not "holy."

process of assimilation to the mystery of Christ inherent in the repetition of the Hail Mary.

When we repeat the name of Jesus — the only name given to us by which we may hope for salvation<sup>69</sup> — in close association with the name of His blessed mother, almost as if it were done at her suggestion, we set out on a path of assimilation meant to help us enter more deeply into the life of Christ.

It is from Mary's uniquely privileged relationship with Christ — which makes her the mother of God, *Theotokos*, ("God-bearer") — that the forcefulness of the appeal we make to her in the second half of the prayer is derived, as we entrust to her maternal intercession our lives and the hour of our death.

### The "*Gloria*"

34. Trinitarian doxology (a hymn or formula of praise to God) is the goal of all Christian contemplation. For Christ is the Way that leads us to the Father in the Spirit. If we travel this Way to the end, we repeatedly encounter the mystery of the three divine Persons, to Whom all praise, worship, and thanksgiving are due.

It is important that the *Gloria*, the high point of contemplation, be given due prominence in the Rosary. In public recitation it could be sung, as a way of giving proper emphasis to the essentially Trinitarian structure of all Christian prayer.

To the extent that meditation on the mystery is attentive and profound, and to the extent that it is enlivened — from one Hail Mary to the next — by love for Christ and for Mary, the glorification of the Trinity at the end of each decade, takes on its proper contemplative tone. Far from being a perfunctory conclusion, it raises the mind, as it were, to the heights of Heaven and enables us, in a way, to relive the experience of Tabor, a foretaste of the contemplation yet to come: "It is good for us to be here!"<sup>70</sup>

### The concluding short prayer

35. In current practice, the Trinitarian doxology is followed by a brief concluding prayer which varies according to local custom.

Such invocations are valuable, but it is worthwhile to note that the full spiritual fruitfulness of each mystery would be better expressed by a concluding prayer for the fruits specific to that mystery. In this way the Rosary would better express its connection with the Christian life.

There is one beautiful liturgical prayer that suggests as much, inviting us to pray that, by meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, we may "imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise."<sup>(38)</sup>

Such a final prayer could take on a legitimate variety of forms, as indeed it already does. In this way the Rosary can be better adapted to different spiritual traditions and different Christian communities.

It is to be hoped, then, that appropriate formulas will be widely circulated, after due pastoral discernment and perhaps after experimental use in centres and shrines particularly devoted to the Rosary, so that the People of God may benefit from an abundance of authentic spiritual riches and find nourishment for their own contemplation.

### The Rosary beads

36. The traditional aid used for the recitation of the Rosary is the set of beads. At the most superficial level, the beads often become a simple counting mechanism to mark the succession of Hail Mary's. Yet they can also take on a symbolism which can give added depth to contemplation.

Here the first thing to note is the way the beads converge upon the Crucifix, which both opens and closes the unfolding sequence of prayer. The life and prayer of believers is centered upon Christ. Everything begins from Him; everything leads

69 See Acts 4:12.

70 Lk 9:33

toward Him; everything, through Him, in the Holy Spirit, arrives at the Father.

As a counting mechanism, marking the progress of the prayer, the beads evoke the unending path of contemplation and of Christian perfection.

Blessed Bartolo Longo saw them also as a "chain" which links us to God: a chain, yes, but a sweet chain, for sweet indeed is the bond to God Who is also our Father; a "filial" chain which puts us in tune with Mary, the "handmaid of the Lord"<sup>71</sup> and, most of all, with Christ Himself, Who, though He was in the form of God, made Himself a "Servant" out of love for us.<sup>72</sup>

A fine way to expand the symbolism of the beads is to let them remind us of our many relationships — of the bond of communion and fraternity which unites us all in Christ.

### The opening and closing

37. At present, in different parts of the Church, there are many ways to introduce the Rosary.

In some places, it is customary to begin with the opening words of Psalm 70: "O God, come to my aid; O Lord, make haste to help me," as if to nourish in those who are praying a humble awareness of their own insufficiency.

In other places, the Rosary begins with the recitation of the Creed, as if to make the profession of faith the basis of the contemplative journey about to be undertaken.

These and similar customs, to the extent that they prepare the mind for contemplation, are all equally legitimate.

The Rosary is then ended with a prayer for the intentions of the Pope, as if to expand the vision of the one praying to embrace all the needs of the Church. It is precisely in order to encourage this ecclesial dimension of the Rosary that the Church has seen fit to grant indulgences to those who recite it with the required dispositions.

If prayed in this way, the Rosary truly becomes a spiritual itinerary in which Mary acts as mother, teacher, and guide, sustaining the faithful by her powerful intercession. Is it any wonder, then, that the soul feels the need, after saying this prayer and experiencing so profoundly the motherhood of Mary, to burst forth in praise of the Blessed Virgin, either in that splendid prayer the *Salve Regina* ("Hail, Holy Queen") or in the Litany of Loretto? This is the crowning moment of an inner journey which has brought the faithful into living contact with the mystery of Christ and His blessed mother.

### Distribution over time

38. The Rosary can be recited in full every day, and there are those who most laudably do so. In this way it fills with prayer the days of many a contemplative, or keeps company with the sick and the elderly who have abundant time at their disposal.

Yet it is clear — and this applies all the more if the new series of *mysteria lucis* is included — that many people will not be able to recite more than a part of the Rosary, according to a certain weekly pattern. This weekly distribution has the effect of giving each day of the week a different spiritual "colour," by analogy with the way in which the Liturgy colours the different seasons of the liturgical year.

According to current practice, Monday and Thursday are dedicated to the "joyful mysteries"; Tuesday and Friday to the "sorrowful mysteries"; and Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday to the "glorious mysteries."

Where might the "mysteries of light" be inserted?

If we consider that the "glorious mysteries" are said on both Saturday and Sunday, and that Saturday has always had a special Marian flavour, the second weekly meditation on the "joyful mysteries," mysteries in which Mary's presence is

71 Lk 1:38

72 Phil 2:7

especially pronounced, could be moved to Saturday. Thursday would then be free for meditating on the "mysteries of light."

This suggestion is not intended to limit a rightful freedom in personal and community prayer, where account needs to be taken of spiritual and pastoral needs and of the occurrence of particular liturgical celebrations which might call for suitable adaptations.

What is really important is that the Rosary should always be seen and experienced as a path of contemplation. In the Rosary, in a way similar to what takes place in the Liturgy, the Christian week, centered on Sunday, the day of Resurrection, becomes a journey through the mysteries of the life of Christ, and He is revealed in the lives of His disciples as the Lord of time and of history.

## CONCLUSION

**"Blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain linking us to God"**

39. What has been said so far makes abundantly clear the richness of this traditional prayer, which has the simplicity of a popular devotion, but also the theological depth of a prayer suited to those who feel the need for deeper contemplation.

The Church has always attributed particular efficacy to this prayer, entrusting to the Rosary — to its choral recitation and its constant practice — the most difficult problems. At times when Christianity itself seemed under threat, its deliverance was attributed to the power of this prayer, and Our Lady of the Rosary was acclaimed as the one whose intercession brought salvation.

Today I willingly entrust to the power of this prayer — as I mentioned at the beginning — the cause of peace in the world and the cause of the family.

### Peace

40. The grave challenges confronting the world at the start of this new millennium lead us to think that only an intervention from on high, capable of guiding the hearts of those living in situations of conflict and those governing the destinies of nations, can give reason to hope for a brighter future.

The Rosary is by its nature a prayer for peace, since it consists of the contemplation of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the One Who is "our peace."<sup>73</sup> Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ — and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary — learns the secret of peace and makes it his life's project.

Moreover, by virtue of its meditative character, with the tranquil succession of Hail Mary's, the Rosary has a peaceful effect on those who pray it, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost depths, and to spread around them, that true peace which is the special gift of the risen Lord.<sup>74</sup>

The Rosary is also a prayer for peace because of the fruits of charity which it produces. When prayed well in a truly meditative way, the Rosary leads to an encounter with Christ in His mysteries and so cannot fail to draw attention to the Face of Christ in others, especially in the most afflicted.

How could one possibly contemplate the mystery of the Child of Bethlehem in the joyful mysteries without experiencing the desire to welcome, defend, and promote life, and to shoulder the burdens of suffering children all over the world?

How could one possibly follow in the footsteps of Christ the Revealer in the mysteries of light without resolving to bear witness to His "beatitudes" in daily life?

And how could one contemplate Christ carrying the cross and Christ crucified without feeling the need to act as a "Simon of Cyrene" for our brothers and sisters weighed down by grief or crushed by despair?

73 Eph 2:14

74 See Jn 14:27, 20:21.

Finally, how could one possibly gaze upon the glory of the risen Christ or of Mary Queen of Heaven without yearning to make this world more beautiful, more just, more closely conformed to God's plan?

In short, by focussing our eyes on Christ, the Rosary also makes us peacemakers in the world. By its nature as an insistent choral petition in harmony with Christ's invitation to "pray ceaselessly,"<sup>75</sup> the Rosary allows us to hope that, even today, the difficult "battle" for peace can be won.

Far from offering an escape, the Rosary obliges us to see the problems of the world with responsible and generous eyes, and obtains for us the strength to face them with the certainty of God's help and the firm intention of bearing witness in every situation to "love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."<sup>76</sup>

#### **The family: parents ...**

41. As a prayer for peace, the Rosary is, and always has been, a prayer of and for the family.

At one time this prayer was particularly dear to Christian families, and it certainly brought them closer together. It is important not to lose this precious inheritance. We need to return to the practice of family prayer and prayer for families, continuing to use the Rosary.

In my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* I encouraged the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours by the lay faithful in the ordinary life of parish communities and Christian groups;(39) I now wish to do the same for the Rosary.

These two paths of Christian contemplation are not mutually exclusive; they complement each other. I therefore ask those who devote themselves to the pastoral care of families to recommend heartily the recitation of the Rosary.

The family that prays together stays together. The Holy Rosary, by age-old tradition, has shown itself particularly effective as a prayer which brings the family together. Individual family members, in turning their eyes toward Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another, and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God.

Many of the problems facing contemporary families, especially in economically developed societies, result from their increasing difficulty in communicating. Families seldom manage to come together, and the rare occasions when they do are often taken up with watching television.

To return to the recitation of the family Rosary means filling daily life with very different images: images of the mystery of salvation, images of the Redeemer and His most blessed mother.

The family that recites the Rosary together reproduces something of the atmosphere of the household of Nazareth: its members place Jesus at the centre, they share His joys and sorrows, they place their needs and their plans in His hands, and they draw from Him the hope and the strength to go on.

#### **... and children**

42. It is also beautiful and fruitful to entrust to this prayer the growth and development of children.

Does the Rosary not follow the life of Christ from His conception to His death and then to His Resurrection and His glory?

Parents are finding it ever more difficult to follow the lives of their children as they grow to maturity. In a society of advanced technology, of mass communication and globalization, everything has become hurried, and the cultural distance between generations is growing ever greater.

The most diverse messages and the most unpredictable experiences rapidly make their way into the lives of children and adolescents, and parents can become quite

75 Lk 18:1

76 Col 3:14

anxious about the dangers their children face. At times, parents suffer acute disappointment at the failure of their children to resist the seductions of the drug culture, the lure of an unbridled hedonism, the temptation to violence, and the manifold expressions of meaninglessness and despair.

To pray the Rosary for children — and, even more, with children — training them from their earliest years to experience this daily "pause for prayer" with the family, is admittedly not the solution to every problem, but it is a spiritual aid which should not be underestimated.

It could be objected that the Rosary seems hardly suited to the taste of children and young people of today. But perhaps the objection is directed to an impoverished method of praying it. Furthermore, provided the Rosary's basic structure is maintained, there is nothing to stop children and young people from praying it — either within the family or in groups — with appropriate symbolic and practical aids to understanding and appreciation.

Why not try it? With God's help, a pastoral approach to youth which is positive, impassioned, and creative — as shown by the World Youth Days! — is capable of achieving quite remarkable results. If the Rosary is well presented, I am sure that young people will once more surprise adults by the way they make this prayer their own and recite it with the enthusiasm typical of their age group.

### **The Rosary, a treasure to be rediscovered**

**43. Dear brothers and sisters!**

A prayer so easy and yet so rich truly deserves to be rediscovered by the Christian community. Let us do so, especially this year, as a means of confirming the direction outlined in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, from which the pastoral plans of so many particular churches have drawn inspiration as they look to the immediate future.

I turn particularly to you, my dear brother bishops, priests, and deacons, and to you, pastoral agents in your different ministries: through your own personal experience of the beauty of the Rosary, may you come to promote it with conviction.

I also place my trust in you, theologians: by your sage and rigorous reflection, rooted in the word of God and sensitive to the lived experience of the Christian people, may you help them to discover the biblical foundations, the spiritual riches and the pastoral value of this traditional prayer.

I count on you, consecrated men and women, called in a particular way to contemplate the Face of Christ at the school of Mary.

I look to all of you, brothers and sisters of every state of life; to you, Christian families; to you, the sick and elderly; and to you, young people: confidently take up the Rosary once again. Rediscover the Rosary in the light of Scripture, in harmony with the Liturgy, and in the context of your daily lives.

May this appeal of mine not go unheard!

At the start of the twenty-fifth year of my pontificate, I entrust this Apostolic Letter to the loving hands of the Virgin Mary, prostrating myself in spirit before her image in the splendid shrine built for her by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the apostle of the Rosary.

I willingly make my own the touching words with which he concluded his well known *Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary*:

"O blessed Rosary of Mary, sweet chain which unites us to God, bond of love which unites us to the angels, tower of salvation against the assaults of Hell, safe port in our universal shipwreck, we will never abandon you. You will be our comfort in the hour of death, yours our final kiss as life ebbs away. And the last word from our lips will be your sweet name, O Queen of the Rosary of Pompei, O dearest mother, O refuge of sinners, O sovereign consoler of the afflicted. May you be everywhere blessed, today and always, on earth and in Heaven."

*From the Vatican,  
on the 16th day of October in the year 2002,  
the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of my pontificate.*

John Paul II

### Endnotes

- 1 Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 45
- 2 Pope Paul VI: *Marialis Cultus*, 42
- 3 See *Acta Leonis XIII*, 3.
- 4 Pope John XXIII: *Il religioso convegno*.
- 5 Angelus: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*
- 6 *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 93 (2001), 285.
- 7 During the years of preparation for the Council, Pope John XXIII did not fail to encourage the Christian community to recite the Rosary for the success of this ecclesial event: see *Letter to the Cardinal Vicar*, September 28 1960.
- 8 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 66
- 9 Pope John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 32
- 10 *Ibid.*, 33
- 11 It is well known and bears repeating that private revelations are not the same as public revelation, which is binding on the whole Church. It is the task of the Magisterium to discern and recognize the authenticity and value of private revelations for the piety of the faithful.
- 12 Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort: *The Secret of the Rosary*
- 13 Blessed Bartolo Longo: *Storia del Santuario di Pompei*, 59
- 14 Pope Paul VI: *Marialis Cultus*, 47
- 15 Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10
- 16 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 17 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 58
- 18 Blessed Bartolo Longo: *I Quindici Sabati del Santissimo Rosario*, 27
- 19 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 53
- 20 *Ibid.*, 60
- 21 See Pope John Paul II: *Urbi et Orbi* (October 17 1978).
- 22 Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort: *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*
- 23 CCC 2679
- 24 *Ibid.* 2675
- 25 Blessed Bartolo Longo: *Supplication to the Queen of the Holy Rosary*. The *Supplication* was composed in 1883 in response to the appeal of Pope Leo XIII, made in his first Encyclical on the Rosary, for the spiritual commitment of all Catholics in combating social ills. It is solemnly recited twice yearly, in May and October.
- 26 Dante Alighieri: *Divina Commedia, Paradiso* XXXIII, 13-15
- 27 Pope John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 20
- 28 Pope Paul VI: *Marialis Cultus*, 46
- 29 Pope John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 28
- 30 CCC 515
- 31 Pope John Paul II: Angelus Message, October 29 1978
- 32 Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
- 33 See Irenaeus of Lyons: *Adversus Haereses*, III, 18, 1.
- 34 CCC 2616
- 35 See Pope John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 33.
- 36 Pope John Paul II: *Letter to Artists*, April 4 1999, 1.
- 37 Pope Paul VI: *Marialis Cultus*, 46. This custom has also been recently praised by the Congregation for Divine Worship and for the Discipline of the Sacraments in its *Direttorio su pietà popolare e liturgia*.
- 38 "...concede, quaesumus, ut haec mysteria sacratissimo beatae Mariae Virginis Rosario recolentes, et imitemur quod continent, et quod promittunt assequamur." *Missale Romanum* 1960, in festo B.M. Virginis a Rosario.
- 39 See Pope John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 34.



## Appendix 3

## Devotion to Our Lady

From Pope Pius XII: *Ad Coeli Reginam*, 1954, proclaiming the Queenship of Mary

44. Theologians and preachers, when treating these and like questions concerning the Blessed Virgin, must avoid straying from the correct course, with a twofold error to guard against: that is to say, 1) they must beware of unfounded opinions and exaggerated expressions which go beyond the truth; 2) on the other hand, they must watch out for excessive narrowness of mind in weighing that exceptional, sublime, indeed all but divine dignity of the Mother of God, which the Angelic Doctor teaches must be attributed to her "because of the infinite goodness that is God."<sup>1</sup>

From Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 1964, on the Church

67. The sacred synod...strongly urges theologians and preachers of the word of God to be careful to refrain as much from all false exaggeration as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God.<sup>2</sup>

Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium, let them rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin, which always refer to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity, and devotion. Let them carefully refrain from whatever might by word or deed lead the separated brethren or any others whatsoever into error about the true doctrine of the Church.

Let the faithful remember, moreover, that true devotion consists neither in sterile or transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to recognize the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love towards our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.

From Paul VI: *Marialis Cultus*, 1974, on devotion to Mary

15. We wish to emphasize the fact that the veneration which the universal Church today accords to blessed Mary is a derivation from and an extension and unceasing increase of the devotion that the Church of every age has paid to her, with careful attention to truth and with an ever watchful nobility of expression.

31. In this context we wish to mention two attitudes which in pastoral practice could nullify the norm of the Second Vatican Council.

In the first place there are certain persons concerned with the care of souls who scorn, *a priori*,<sup>3</sup> devotions of piety which, in their correct forms, have been recommended by the Magisterium, who leave them aside and in this way create a vacuum which they do not fill. They forget that the Council has said that devotions of piety should harmonize with the liturgy, not be suppressed.

Secondly there are those who, without wholesome liturgical and pastoral criteria, mix practices of piety and liturgical acts in hybrid celebrations. It sometimes happens that novenas or similar practices of piety are inserted into the very celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This creates the danger that the Lord's Memorial Rite, instead of being the culmination of the meeting of the Christian community, becomes the occasion, as it were, for devotional practices. For those who act in this way we wish to recall the rule laid down by the Council prescribing that exercises

1 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 25, a. 6, ad 4

2 See Pius XII, *Radio Message*, October 24 1954; and *Ad Coeli Reginam*, 44.

3 "At the outset," "from the beginning."

of piety should be harmonized with the liturgy, not merged into it.

Wise pastoral action should, on the one hand, point out and emphasize the proper nature of the liturgical acts, while on the other hand it should enhance the value of practices of piety in order to adapt them to the needs of individual communities in the Church and to make them valuable aids to the liturgy.

**34.** Devotion to the Blessed Virgin must also pay close attention to certain findings of the human sciences. This will help to eliminate one of the causes of the difficulties experienced in devotion to the Mother of the Lord: namely, the discrepancy existing between some aspects of this devotion and modern anthropological<sup>4</sup> discoveries and the profound changes which have occurred in the psycho-sociological field in which modern man lives and works.

The picture of the Blessed Virgin presented in a certain type of devotional literature cannot easily be reconciled with today's lifestyle, especially the way women live today.

- In the home, woman's equality and co-responsibility with man in the running of the family are being justly recognized by laws and the evolution of customs.
- In the sphere of politics women have in many countries gained a position in public life equal to that of men.
- In the social field women are at work in a whole range of different employments, getting further away every day from the restricted surroundings of the home.
- In the cultural field new possibilities are opening up for women in scientific research and intellectual activities.

In consequence of these phenomena, some people are becoming disenchanted with devotion to the Blessed Virgin and finding it difficult to take Mary of Nazareth as an example because the horizons of her life, so they say, seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today.

In this regard we exhort theologians, those responsible for the local Christian communities, and the faithful themselves to examine these difficulties with due care. At the same time we wish to take the opportunity of offering our own contribution to their solution by making a few observations.

**35.** First: the Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived and which today scarcely exists anywhere. She is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God,<sup>5</sup> because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.

**36.** Second: the difficulties alluded to above are closely related to certain aspects of the image of Mary found in popular writings. They are not connected with the Gospel image of Mary, nor with the doctrinal data which have been made explicit through a slow and conscientious process of drawing from Revelation.

It should be considered quite normal for succeeding generations of Christians in differing socio-cultural contexts to have expressed their sentiments about the Mother of Jesus in a way and manner which reflected their own age. In contemplating Mary and her mission, these different generations of Christians saw in her the New Woman and perfect Christian in the most characteristic situations in the life of a woman; they found in her as a virgin, wife, and mother the outstanding type of womanhood and the pre-eminent exemplar of life lived in accordance with the Gospels.

When the Church considers the long history of Marian devotion, she rejoices at the continuity of the element of [devotion] which it shows, but she does not bind herself to any particular expression of an individual cultural epoch or to the

<sup>4</sup> "Pertaining to the study of human physiology and psychology."

<sup>5</sup> Lk 1:38

particular anthropological ideas underlying such expressions. The Church understands that certain outward religious expressions, while perfectly valid in themselves, may be less suitable to men and women of different ages and cultures.

37. Finally: our own time, no less than former times, is called upon to verify its knowledge of reality with the word of God, and, keeping to the matter at present under consideration, to compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel.

The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with the human sciences and the various situations in the world today taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time.

The modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-making power<sup>6</sup> in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent,<sup>7</sup> not to the solution of a contingent problem, but to that "event of world importance," as the Incarnation of the Word has been rightly called.<sup>8</sup>

The modern woman will appreciate that Mary's choice of the state of virginity, which in God's plan prepared her for the mystery of the Incarnation, was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state, but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God.

The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions.<sup>9</sup>

The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord,"<sup>10</sup> a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile.<sup>11</sup> These are situations that cannot escape the attention of those who wish to support, with the Gospel spirit, the liberating energies of man and of society.

And Mary will appear not as a mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ<sup>12</sup> and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary.<sup>13</sup>

These are but examples, but examples which show clearly that the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion the men and women of our time in any of their profound expectations, but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts.

38. Having offered these directives, which are intended to favour the harmonious development of devotion to the Mother of the Lord, we consider it opportune to draw attention to certain attitudes of piety which are incorrect.

The Second Vatican Council has already authoritatively denounced both the exaggeration of content and form which even falsifies doctrine, and likewise the small-mindedness which obscures the figure and mission of Mary.

6 See the talk on "Matrimony," Appendix 2.

7 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 56

8 Saint Peter Chrysologus: *Sermo CXLII, Patrologica Latina* 52, 583

9 Lk 1:51-53

10 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 55

11 Mt 2:13-23

12 Jn 2:1-12

13 Pope Paul VI: *Signum Magnum*, I: September 15, Prayer over the gifts

The Council has also denounced certain devotional deviations, such as vain credulity, which substitutes reliance on merely external practices for serious commitment, or sterile and ephemeral sentimentality, so alien to the spirit of the Gospel — a Gospel that demands persevering and practical action.<sup>14</sup>

We reaffirm the Council's reprobation of such attitudes and practices. They are not in harmony with the Catholic Faith and therefore they must have no place in Catholic worship. Careful defence against these errors and deviations will render devotion to the Blessed Virgin more vigorous and more authentic.

- It will make this devotion solidly based, with the consequence that study of the sources of Revelation and attention to the documents of the Magisterium will prevail over the exaggerated search for novelties or extraordinary phenomena.
- It will ensure that this devotion is objective in its historical setting, eliminating everything that is obviously legendary or false.
- It will ensure that this devotion matches its doctrinal content — hence the necessity of avoiding a one-sided presentation of the figure of Mary, which by overstressing one element compromises the overall picture given by the Gospel.
- It will make this devotion clear in its motivation, carefully banning every unworthy self-interest from the area of what is sacred.

From Scott Hahn: *Hail, Holy Queen*, Chapter 8

I wrote this book so that my fellow-Catholics would never be ashamed of their supernatural mother as I was once ashamed of my natural mother when she came to take me home from school. Yet I'd also like to raise a caution....

I urge you never to forget that, when you defend the blessed virgin, you're defending your mother, not a quarterback, not a goal line. You should defend her only as she would want to be defended. No mother worth the name wants her children to go on the offensive in defending her. No mother worth the name wants her children to be rude in defending her. No mother worth the name wants to be the subject of a schoolyard brawl.

I say this because I sometimes encounter people who practice apologetics as a full-contact sport or as take-no-prisoners warfare. For such apologists, the goal is to win the argument, even if that means utterly humiliating their enemies. That is no way to prove Marian doctrines. Children of Mary have no enemies. We know only our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ — our *adelphoi*, "from the same womb." We need not so much argue them back home (though arguments are sometimes necessary) as love them home (though love can sometimes be tough).

Moreover, we must never grow overly proud that we have come to recognize ourselves as children of the queen mother. We must never come to believe that we have all the answers. Though the answers are all available to us, no one is ever in full possession of them. God will continue to humble us, to remind us that we are children, by allowing us to fall and to find ourselves without the right answer at the right moment. He will even permit this when we are, ostensibly, working for His good cause.

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<sup>14</sup> Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 67

## Appendix 4

Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos*

On the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church

## INTRODUCTION

1. "Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife."<sup>1</sup>

Inspired by the Gospel, the Fathers of the Church, from the earliest centuries, stressed that just as St. Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing,<sup>(1)</sup> he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body — that is, the Church — of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model.

On the occasion of the centenary of Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical *Quamquam Pluries*,<sup>(2)</sup> and in line with the veneration given to St. Joseph over the centuries, I wish to offer for your consideration, dear brothers and sisters, some reflections concerning him "into whose custody God entrusted His most precious treasures."<sup>(3)</sup> I gladly fulfill this pastoral duty so that all may grow in devotion to the patron of the universal Church and in love for the Saviour Whom he served in such an exemplary manner.

In this way, the whole Christian people not only will turn to St. Joseph with greater fervour and invoke his patronage with trust, but also will always keep before their eyes his humble, mature way of serving and of "taking part" in the plan of salvation.<sup>(4)</sup>

I am convinced that by reflection on the way in which Mary's spouse shared in the divine mystery, the Church — on the road toward the future with all of humanity — will be enabled to discover ever anew her own identity within this redemptive plan, which is founded on the mystery of the Incarnation.

This is precisely the mystery in which Joseph of Nazareth shared as no other human being did except Mary, the mother of the Incarnate Word. He shared in it with her; he was involved in the same salvific event; he was the guardian of the same love, through the power of which the eternal Father "destined us to be His sons through Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

## I: THE GOSPEL PORTRAIT

**Marriage to Mary**

2. "Joseph, Son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for That Which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."<sup>3</sup>

In these words we find the core of biblical truth about St. Joseph; they refer to that moment in his life to which the Fathers of the Church make special reference.

The evangelist Matthew explains the significance of this moment, while also describing how Joseph lived it. However, in order for us to understand fully both its content and its context, it is important to keep in mind the parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke.

In Matthew we read: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit."<sup>4</sup> However, the origin of Mary's pregnancy "of the Holy Spirit" is described more fully and explicitly in what Luke tells us about the annunciation of Jesus' birth: "The angel Gabriel was sent from

1 See Mt 1:24.

2 Eph 1:5

3 Mt 1:20-21

4 Mt 1:18

God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary."<sup>5</sup>

The angel's greeting — "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you"<sup>6</sup> — created an inner turmoil in Mary and also moved her to reflect. Then the messenger reassured the Virgin and at the same time revealed God's special plan for her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David."<sup>7</sup>

A little earlier, the Gospel writer had stated that at the moment of the Annunciation, Mary was "betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David." The nature of this "marriage" is explained indirectly when Mary, after hearing what the messenger says about the birth of the Child, asks, "How can this be, since I do not know man?"<sup>8</sup> The angel responds: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."<sup>9</sup>

Although Mary is already "wedded" to Joseph, she will remain a virgin, because the Child conceived in her at the Annunciation was conceived by the Holy Spirit. At this point Luke's text coincides with Matthew 1:18 and serves to explain what we read there. If, after her marriage to Joseph, Mary is found to be "with child of the Holy Spirit," this fact corresponds to all that the Annunciation means: in particular, to Mary's final words: "Let it be to me according to your word."<sup>10</sup> In response to what is clearly the plan of God, with the passing of days and weeks, Mary's "pregnancy" becomes visible to the people and to Joseph; she appears before them as one who must give birth and who carries within herself the mystery of motherhood.

3. In these circumstances, "her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly."<sup>11</sup> He did not know how to deal with Mary's astonishing motherhood. He certainly sought an answer to this unsettling question, but above all, he sought a way out of what was for him a difficult situation. "But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for That Which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.'"<sup>12</sup>

There is a strict parallel between the "annunciation" in Matthew's text and the one in Luke. The divine messenger introduces to Joseph the mystery of Mary's motherhood. While remaining a virgin, she who by law is his "spouse" has become a mother through the Holy Spirit.

And when the Son in Mary's womb comes into the world, He must receive the name Jesus. This was a name known among the Israelites and sometimes given to their sons. In this case, however, it is the Son Who, in accordance with the divine promise, will bring to perfect fulfilment the meaning of the name *Jesus-Yehos ua'* — "God saves."

Joseph is visited by the messenger as Mary's spouse, as the one who in due time must give this name to the Son to be born of the Virgin of Nazareth, who is married to him. It is to Joseph, then, that the messenger turns, entrusting to him the responsibilities of an earthly father with regard to Mary's Son.

"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary as his wife." He took her in all the mystery of her motherhood.

5 Lk 1:26-27

6 Lk 1:28

7 Lk 1:30-32

8 Lk 1:34

9 Lk 1:35

10 Lk 1:38

11 Mt 1:19

12 Mt 1:20-21

He took her together with the Son Who had come into the world by the Holy Spirit.

In this way, he showed a readiness of will, like Mary's, with regard to what God asked of him through the angel.

## II THE GUARDIAN OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD

4. Soon after the Annunciation, Mary went to the house of Zechariah to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth. Even as she offered her greeting, she heard what Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Spirit,"<sup>13</sup> said to her.

Besides offering a salutation which recalled that of the angel at the Annunciation, Elizabeth also said: "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."<sup>14</sup> These words were the guiding thought of the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, in which I sought to deepen the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which stated that the blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith and faithfully preserved her union with her Son even to the cross,<sup>(5)</sup> "preceding"<sup>(6)</sup> all those who follow Christ by faith.

Now at the beginning of this pilgrimage, the faith of Mary meets the faith of Joseph. Elizabeth said of the Redeemer's mother, "blessed is she who believed"; but in a certain sense this blessedness can be referred to Joseph as well, since he responded positively to the word of God when it was communicated to him at the decisive moment. While it is true that Joseph did not respond to the angel's "announcement" in the same way as Mary, he "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife." What he did is the clearest "obedience of faith."<sup>15</sup>

One can say that what Joseph did united him in an altogether special way to the faith of Mary. He accepted as truth coming from God the very thing that she had already accepted at the Annunciation.

The Council teaches: "The obedience of faith' must be given to God as He reveals Himself. By this obedience of faith man freely commits himself entirely to God, making 'the full submission of his intellect and will to God Who reveals' and willingly assenting to the revelation given by Him."<sup>(7)</sup> This statement, which touches the very essence of faith, is perfectly applicable to Joseph of Nazareth.

5. Therefore Joseph became a unique guardian of the mystery "hidden for ages in God,"<sup>16</sup> as did Mary, in that decisive moment which St. Paul calls "the fullness of time," when "God sent forth his Son born of woman ... to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."<sup>17</sup> In the words of the Council: "It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal Himself and to make known the mystery of His will."<sup>18</sup> His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made Flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and become sharers in the divine nature."<sup>19</sup><sup>(8)</sup>

Together with Mary, Joseph is the first guardian of this divine mystery. Together with Mary, and in relation to Mary, he shares in this final phase of God's Self-revelation in Christ and he does so from the very beginning.

Looking at the gospel texts of both Matthew and Luke, we can also say that Joseph is the first to share in the faith of the Mother of God and that in doing so he supports his spouse in the faith of the divine annunciation. He is also the first to be placed by God on the path of Mary's pilgrimage of faith. It is a path along which — especially at the time of Calvary and Pentecost — Mary will precede in a

13 Lk 1:41

14 Lk 1:45

15 See Rom 1:5; 16:26; 2 Cor 10:5-6.

16 Eph 3:9

17 Gal 4:4-5

18 See Eph 1:9.

19 See Eph 2:18; 2 Pt 1:4.

perfect way.(9)

6. Joseph's path — his pilgrimage of faith — ended before Mary stood at the foot of the cross on Golgotha, before the time when Christ returned to the Father, before Mary was present in the upper room at Pentecost, on the day the Church was manifested to the world, having been born in the power of the Spirit of truth.

Nevertheless, Joseph's way of faith moved in the same direction: it was totally determined by the same mystery, of which he, together with Mary, had been the first guardian. The Incarnation and Redemption constitute an organic and indissoluble unity, in which "the plan of revelation is realized by words and deeds which are intrinsically bound up with each other."<sup>(10)</sup>

Precisely because of this unity, Pope John XXIII, who had a great devotion to St. Joseph, directed that Joseph's name be inserted in the Roman Canon of the Mass — which is the perpetual memorial of redemption — after the name of Mary and before the apostles, popes, and martyrs.<sup>(11)</sup>

### The Service of Fatherhood

7. As can be deduced from the Gospel texts, Joseph's marriage to Mary is the juridical basis of his fatherhood. It was to assure fatherly protection for Jesus that God chose Joseph to be Mary's spouse.

It follows that Joseph's fatherhood — a relationship that places him as close as possible to Christ, to Whom every election and predestination is ordered<sup>20</sup> — comes to pass through marriage to Mary; *i.e.*, through the family. While clearly affirming that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and that virginity remained intact in the marriage,<sup>21</sup> the evangelists refer to Joseph as Mary's husband and to Mary as Joseph's wife.<sup>22</sup>

And while it is important for the Church to profess the virginal conception of Jesus, it is no less important for her to uphold Mary's marriage to Joseph, because juridically Joseph's fatherhood depends on it.

Thus one understands why the generations are listed according to the genealogy of Joseph. "Why," St. Augustine asks, "should they not be according to Joseph? Was he not Mary's husband?... Scripture states, through the authority of an angel, that he was her husband. 'Do not fear,' says the angel, 'to take Mary your wife, for That Which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.'

"Joseph was told to name the Child, although not born from his seed. 'She will bear a son,' the angel says, 'and you will call him Jesus.' Scripture recognizes that Jesus is not born of Joseph's seed, since in his concern about the origin of Mary's pregnancy, Joseph is told that it is of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, he is not deprived of his fatherly authority from the moment that he is told to name the child. Finally, even the Virgin Mary, well aware that she has not conceived Christ as a result of conjugal relations with Joseph, still calls him Christ's father."<sup>(12)</sup>

Mary's Son is also Joseph's Son by virtue of the marriage bond that unites them: "By reason of their faithful marriage, both of them deserve to be called Christ's parents; not only his mother, but also his father, who was a parent in the same way that he was the mother's spouse: in mind, not in the flesh."<sup>(13)</sup>

In this marriage none of the requisites of marriage were lacking: "In Christ's parents all the goods of marriage were realized — offspring, fidelity, and the Sacrament: the offspring being the Lord Jesus Himself; fidelity, since there was no adultery: the Sacrament, since there was no divorce."<sup>(14)</sup>

Analyzing the nature of marriage, both St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas always identify it with an "indivisible union of souls," a "union of hearts," with "consent."<sup>(15)</sup> These elements are found in an exemplary manner in the marriage of Mary and Joseph. At the culmination of the history of salvation, when God reveals

<sup>20</sup> See Rom 8:28-29.

<sup>21</sup> See Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38.

<sup>22</sup> See Mt 1:16, 18-20, 24; Lk 1:27; 2:5.



His love for humanity through the gift of the Word, it is precisely the marriage of Mary and Joseph that brings to realization, in full "freedom," the "spousal gift of self" in receiving and expressing such a love.(16)

"In this great undertaking, which is the renewal of all things in Christ, marriage — it, too, purified and renewed — becomes a new reality, a Sacrament of the New Covenant. We see that at the beginning of the New Testament, as at the beginning of the Old, there is a married couple. But whereas Adam and Eve were the source of the evil that was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Saviour began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested His all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family — that sanctuary of love and cradle of life."(17)

How much the family of today can learn from this! "The essence and role of the family are, in the final analysis, specified by love. Hence the family has the mission to guard, reveal, and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of, and a real sharing in, God's love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church, His bride."(18)

This being the case, it is in the Holy Family, the original "Church in miniature (*Ecclesia domestica*),"(19) that every Christian family must be reflected. "Through God's mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is therefore the prototype and example for all Christian families."(20)

8. St. Joseph was called by God to serve the Person and mission of Jesus directly, through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that, as the Church's Liturgy teaches, he "cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation" and is truly a "minister of salvation."(21)

His fatherhood is expressed concretely "in his having made his life a service, a sacrifice, to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission connected with it; in having used the legal authority which was his over the Holy Family in order to make a total gift of self, of his life and work; in having turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of self, an oblation of his heart and all his abilities into love placed at the service of the Messiah growing up in his house."(22)

In recalling that "the beginnings of our redemption" were entrusted "to the faithful care of Joseph,"(23) the Liturgy specifies that "God placed him at the head of His family, as a faithful and prudent servant, so that with fatherly care he might watch over His only begotten Son."(24)

Leo XIII emphasized the sublime nature of this mission: "He among all stands out in his august dignity, since by divine disposition he was guardian, and according to human opinion, father, of God's Son. Whence it followed that the Word of God was subjected to Joseph; He obeyed him and rendered to him that honour and reverence that children owe to their fathers."(25)

Since it is inconceivable that such a sublime task would not be matched by the necessary qualities to fulfill it adequately, we must recognize that Joseph showed Jesus, "by a special gift from heaven, all the natural love, all the affectionate solicitude that a father's heart can know."(26)

Besides fatherly authority over Jesus, God also gave Joseph a share in the corresponding love: the love that has its origin in the Father, "from whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named."<sup>27</sup>

The Gospels clearly describe the fatherly responsibility of Joseph toward Jesus, for salvation — which comes through the humanity of Jesus — is realized in actions which are an everyday part of family life, in keeping with that "condescension" that is inherent in the economy of the Incarnation.

The Gospel writers carefully show how nothing was left to chance in the life of Jesus, but how everything took place according to God's pre-determined plan. The oft-repeated formula, "This happened so that there might be fulfilled..." in reference

to a particular event in the Old Testament, serves to emphasize the unity and continuity of the plan that is fulfilled in Christ.

With the Incarnation, the "promises" and "figures" of the Old Testament become "reality": places, persons, events, and rites interrelate according to precise divine commands, communicated by angels and received by creatures who are particularly sensitive to the voice of God.

Mary is the Lord's humble servant, prepared from eternity for the task of being the Mother of God. Joseph is the one whom God chose to be the "overseer of the Lord's birth,"<sup>(27)</sup> the one who has the responsibility to look after the Son of God's "ordained" entry into the world, in accordance with divine dispositions and human laws. All of the so-called "private" or "hidden" life of Jesus is entrusted to Joseph's guardianship.

### The Census

9. Journeying to Bethlehem for the census in obedience to the orders of legitimate authority, Joseph fulfilled for the Child the significant task of officially inserting the name "Jesus, Son of Joseph of Nazareth"<sup>24</sup> in the registry of the Roman Empire.

This registration clearly shows that Jesus belongs to the human race as a Man among men, a citizen of this world, subject to laws and civil institutions, but also "Saviour of the world."

Origen gives a good description of the theological significance, by no means marginal, of this historical fact: "Since the first census of the whole world took place under Caesar Augustus, and among all the others Joseph too went to register together with Mary his wife, who was with child, and since Jesus was born before the census was completed: to the person who makes a careful examination it will appear that a kind of mystery is expressed in the fact that at the time when all people in the world presented themselves to be counted, Christ too should be counted.

"By being registered with everyone, He could sanctify everyone; inscribed with the whole world in the census, He offered to the world communion with Himself, and after presenting Himself, He wrote all the people of the world in the book of the living, so that as many as believed in Him could then be written in Heaven with the saints of God, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever, Amen."<sup>(28)</sup>

### The Birth at Bethlehem

10. As guardian of the mystery "hidden for ages in the mind of God," which begins to unfold before his eyes "in the fullness of time," Joseph, together with Mary, is a privileged witness to the birth of the Son of God into the world on Christmas night in Bethlehem.

Luke writes: "And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."<sup>25</sup> Joseph was an eyewitness to this birth, which took place in conditions that, humanly speaking, were embarrassing — a first sign of that "self-emptying"<sup>26</sup> which Christ freely accepted for the forgiveness of sins.

Joseph also witnessed the adoration of the shepherds who arrived at Jesus' birthplace after the angel had brought them the great and happy news.<sup>27</sup> Later he also witnessed the homage of the magi who came from the East.<sup>28</sup>

### The Circumcision

11. A son's circumcision was the first religious obligation of a father; with this

23 Eph 3:15

24 See Jn 1:45.

25 Lk 2:6-7

26 See Ph11 2:5-8.

27 See Lk 2:15-16.

28 See Mt 2:11.

ceremony,<sup>29</sup> Joseph exercised his right and duty with regard to Jesus.

The principle that all the rites of the Old Testament are a shadow of the reality<sup>30</sup> explains why Jesus accepted them. Like all the other rites, circumcision, too, is "fulfilled" in Jesus. God's covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was the sign,<sup>31</sup> reached its full effect and perfect realization in Jesus, Who is the "yes" of all the ancient promises.<sup>32</sup>

### Conferral of the Name

12. At the circumcision Joseph named the Child "Jesus." This is the only name in which there is salvation.<sup>33</sup> Its significance had been revealed to Joseph at the moment of his "annunciation": "You shall call the Child Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."<sup>34</sup>

In conferring the name, Joseph declared his own legal fatherhood over Jesus, and in speaking the name he proclaimed the Child's mission as Saviour.

### The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

13. This rite, to which Luke refers,<sup>35</sup> includes the ransom of the first-born and sheds light on the subsequent stay of Jesus in the Temple at the age of twelve.

The ransoming of the first-born was another obligation of the father, and it was fulfilled by Joseph. Represented in the first-born is the people of the covenant, ransomed from slavery in order to belong to God. Here too, Jesus — who is the true "price" of ransom<sup>36</sup> — not only "fulfilled" the Old Testament rite, but at the same time transcended it, since He did not need redemption, but was its very Author.

The Gospel writer notes that "His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him";<sup>37</sup> in particular, at what Simeon said in his canticle to God, when he referred to Jesus as the "salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel" and as a "sign that is spoken against."<sup>38</sup>

### The Flight into Egypt

14. After the presentation in the Temple, the Evangelist Luke notes: "And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the Child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon Him."<sup>39</sup>

But according to Matthew's text, a very important event took place before the return to Galilee, an event in which God, in His providence, once again had recourse to Joseph. We read: "Now when [the magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the Child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the Child, to destroy Him.'"<sup>40</sup>

Herod had learned from the magi visiting from the East about the birth of the "King of the Jews."<sup>41</sup> And when the magi had departed, he "sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under."<sup>42</sup>

29 See Lk 2:21.

30 See Heb 9:9f; 10:1.

31 See Gn 17:13.

32 See 2 Cor 1:20.

33 See Acts 4:12.

34 See Mt 1:21.

35 2:22ff.

36 See 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pt 1:19.

37 Lk 2:23

38 See Lk 2:30-34.

39 Lk 2:39-40

40 Mt 2:13

41 Mt 2:2

42 Mt 2:16

By killing them all, he wished to kill the new-born "King of the Jews," Whom he had heard about. And so Joseph, having been warned in a dream, "took the Child and His mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.'"<sup>43</sup>

And so Jesus' way back to Nazareth from Bethlehem passed through Egypt. Just as God, in His providence, had brought Israel "out of the condition of slavery" in order to begin the Old Covenant, so Joseph, guardian and cooperator with God in His providence, even in exile watched over the One Who brings about the New Covenant.

### Jesus' Stay in the Temple

15. From the time of the Annunciation, both Joseph and Mary found themselves, in a certain sense, at the heart of the mystery hidden for ages in the mind of God, a mystery which had taken on flesh: "The Word became Flesh and dwelt among us."<sup>44</sup>

He dwelt among men, within the surroundings of the Holy Family of Nazareth — one of many families in this small town in Galilee, one of the many families in the land of Israel. There Jesus "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon Him."<sup>45</sup>

The Gospels summarize in a few words the long period of the hidden life, during which Jesus prepared Himself for His Messianic mission. Only one episode from this hidden time is described in the Gospel of Luke: the Passover in Jerusalem, when Jesus was twelve years old.

Together with Mary and Joseph, Jesus took part in the feast as a young pilgrim. "And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem" and "His parents did not know it."<sup>46</sup> After a day's journey, they noticed His absence and began to search "among their kinsfolk and acquaintances."

"After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers."<sup>47</sup> Mary asked: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously."<sup>48</sup> The answer Jesus gave was such that "they did not understand the saying which He spoke to them." He said, "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"<sup>49</sup>

Joseph, of whom Mary had just used the words "your father," heard this answer. That, after all, is what all the people said and thought: "Jesus was the Son (as was supposed) of Joseph."<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, Jesus' reply in the Temple brought once again to the mind of His "supposed father" what he had heard on that night twelve years earlier: "Joseph ... do not fear to take Mary your wife, for That Which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

From that time onward Joseph had known that he was a guardian of the mystery of God, and it was precisely this mystery that the twelve-year-old Jesus brought to mind: "I must be in My Father's house."

### The Support and Education of Jesus of Nazareth

16. The growth of Jesus "in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and

43 Mt 2:14-15; See Hos 11:1.

44 Jn 1:14

45 Lk 2:40

46 Lk 2:43

47 Lk 2:47

48 Lk 2:48

49 Lk 2:49-50

50 Lk 3:23

man"<sup>51</sup> took place within the Holy Family under the eyes of Joseph, who had the important task of "raising" Jesus; that is, feeding, clothing, and educating him, in the Law and in a trade, in keeping with the duties of a father.

In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Church venerates not only the memory of Mary the ever-virgin mother of God, but also the memory of St. Joseph,<sup>(29)</sup> because "he fed Him Whom the faithful must eat as the Bread of eternal life."<sup>(30)</sup>

For His part, Jesus "was obedient to them,"<sup>52</sup> respectfully returning the affection of His "parents." In this way He wished to sanctify the obligations of the family and of work, which He performed at the side of Joseph.

### III A JUST MAN, A HUSBAND

17. In the course of that pilgrimage of faith that was his life, Joseph, like Mary, remained faithful to God's call until the end. Mary's life was the bringing to fullness of that *fiat* first spoken at the Annunciation, but at the moment of Joseph's own "annunciation," he said nothing; instead he simply "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him."<sup>53</sup>

And this first "doing" became the beginning of "Joseph's way." The Gospels do not record any word ever spoken by Joseph along that way. But his silence has its own special eloquence, for it is thanks to it that we can understand the truth of the Gospel's judgement that he was "a just man."<sup>54</sup>

One must come to understand this truth, for it contains one of the most important testimonies concerning man and his vocation. Through many generations, the Church has read this testimony with ever greater attention and with deeper understanding, drawing, as it were, "what is new and what is old"<sup>55</sup> from the storehouse of the noble figure of Joseph.

18. Above all, the "just" man of Nazareth clearly possesses the characteristics of a husband. Luke refers to Mary as "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph."<sup>56</sup> Even before the "mystery hidden for ages"<sup>57</sup> began to be fulfilled, the Gospels set before us the image of husband and wife.

According to Jewish custom, marriage took place in two stages: first, the legal, or true, marriage was celebrated, and then, only after a certain period of time, the husband brought the wife into his own house. Thus, before he lived with Mary, Joseph was already her "husband."

Mary, however, preserved her deep desire to give herself exclusively to God. One may well ask how this desire of Mary's could be reconciled with a "wedding." The answer can come only from the saving events as they unfold, from the special action of God Himself.

From the moment of the Annunciation, Mary knew that she was to fulfill her virginal desire to give herself exclusively and fully to God precisely by becoming the Mother of God's Son. Becoming a Mother by the Holy Spirit was the form her gift of self took: a form which God Himself expected of the Virgin Mary, who was "betrothed" to Joseph.

Mary uttered her *fiat*. The fact that she was "betrothed" to Joseph was part of the very plan of God. This is pointed out by Luke and especially by Matthew. The words spoken to Joseph are very significant: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."<sup>58</sup> These words explain the mystery of Joseph's wife: in her motherhood Mary is a virgin. In her,

51 Lk 2:52  
52 Lk 2:51  
53 Mt 1:24  
54 Mt 1:19  
55 Mt 13:52  
56 Lk 1:27  
57 Eph 3:9  
58 Mt 1:20

"the Son of the Most High" assumed a human Body and became "the Son of Man."

Addressing Joseph through the words of the angel, God spoke to him as the husband of the Virgin of Nazareth. What took place in her through the Holy Spirit also confirmed in a special way the marriage bond that already existed between Joseph and Mary.

God's messenger was clear in what he said to Joseph: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife into your home." Hence, what had taken place earlier — namely, Joseph's marriage to Mary — had happened in accord with God's will and was meant to endure. In her divine motherhood, Mary had to continue to live as "a virgin, the wife of her husband."<sup>59</sup>

19. In the words of the "annunciation" by night, Joseph not only heard the divine truth concerning his wife's indescribable vocation; he also heard once again the truth about his own vocation. This "just" man, who, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the Chosen People, loved the Virgin of Nazareth and was bound to her by a husband's love, was once again called by God to this love. "Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife" into his home;<sup>60</sup> What was conceived in Mary was "of the Holy Spirit."

From expressions such as these are we not to suppose that his love as a man was also given new birth by the Holy Spirit? Are we not to think that the love of God which has been poured forth into the human heart through the Holy Spirit<sup>61</sup> molds every human love to perfection?

This love of God also molds — in a completely unique way — the love of husband and wife, deepening within it everything of human worth and beauty, everything that bespeaks an exclusive gift of self, a covenant between persons, and an authentic communion according to the model of the Blessed Trinity.

"Joseph...took his wife; but he knew her not, until she had borne a son."<sup>62</sup> These words indicate another kind of closeness in marriage. The deep spiritual closeness arising from marital union and the interpersonal contact between man and woman have their definitive origin in the Spirit, the Giver of Life.<sup>63</sup> Joseph, in obedience to the Spirit, found in the Spirit the source of love, the conjugal love which he experienced as a man. And this love proved to be greater than this "just man" could ever have expected within the limits of his human heart.

20. In the Liturgy, Mary is celebrated as "united to Joseph, the just man, by a bond of marital and virginal love."<sup>(31)</sup> There are really two kinds of love here, which together represent the mystery of the Church — virgin and spouse — as symbolized in the marriage of Mary and Joseph.

"Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the value of marriage, but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with His people"<sup>(32)</sup> — the Covenant which is a communion of love between God and human beings.

Through his complete self-sacrifice, Joseph expressed his generous love for the Mother of God and gave her a husband's "gift of self." Even though he decided to draw back so as not to interfere in the plan of God which was coming to pass in Mary, Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and look Mary into his home, while respecting the fact that she belonged exclusively to God.

On the other hand, it was from his marriage to Mary that Joseph derived his singular worth and his rights in regard to Jesus. "It is certain that the worth of the Mother of God is so exalted that nothing could be more sublime; yet because Mary was united to Joseph by the bond of marriage, there can be no doubt but that Joseph approached as no other person ever could that eminent value whereby the Mother of God towers above all creatures.

<sup>59</sup> See Lk 1:27.

<sup>60</sup> Mt 1:24

<sup>61</sup> See Rm 5:5.

<sup>62</sup> Mt 1:24-25

"Since marriage is the highest degree of association and friendship — involving by its very nature a communion of goods — it follows that God, by giving Joseph to the Virgin, did not give him to her only as a companion for life, a witness of her virginity and protector of her honour: He also gave Joseph to Mary in order that he might share, through the marriage pact, in her own sublime greatness."(33)

21. This bond of charity was the core of the Holy Family's life, first in the poverty of Bethlehem, then in their exile in Egypt, and later in the house of Nazareth.

The Church deeply venerates this Family, and proposes it as the model of all families. Inserted directly in the mystery of the Incarnation, the Family of Nazareth has its own special mystery. And in this mystery, as in the Incarnation, one finds a true fatherhood: the human form of the family of the Son of God, a true human family, formed by the divine mystery.

In this Family, Joseph is the father: his fatherhood is not one that derives from begetting offspring; but neither is it an "apparent" or merely "substitute" fatherhood. Rather, it is one that fully shares in authentic human fatherhood and the mission of a father in the family.

This is a consequence of the hypostatic union — humanity taken up into the unity of the Divine Person of the Word-Son, Jesus Christ. Together with human nature, all that is human, and especially the family — as the first dimension of man's existence in the world — is also taken up in Christ.

Within this context, Joseph's human fatherhood was also "taken up" in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation. On the basis of this principle, the words which Mary spoke to the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple take on their full significance: "Your father and I ... have been looking for you."

This is no conventional phrase: Mary's words to Jesus show the complete reality of the Incarnation present in the mystery of the Family of Nazareth. From the beginning, Joseph accepted his human fatherhood over Jesus with the "obedience of faith." And thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit, Who gives Himself to human beings through faith, he certainly came to discover ever more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood.

#### IV WORK AS AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE

22. Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth. The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter.

This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. For Jesus, these were hidden years, the years to which Luke refers after recounting the episode that occurred in the Temple: "And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them."<sup>64</sup> This "submission" or obedience of Jesus in the house of Nazareth should be understood as a sharing in the work of Joseph. Having learned the work of His supposed father, He was known as "the carpenter's son."

If the Family of Nazareth is an example and model for human families in the order of salvation and holiness, so too, by analogy, is Jesus' work at the side of Joseph the carpenter. In our own day, the Church has emphasized this by instituting the liturgical memorial of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1.

Human work, and especially manual labor, receive special prominence in the Gospel. Along with the humanity of the Son of God, work, too, has been taken up in the mystery of the Incarnation, and has also been redeemed in a special way. At the workbench where he plied his trade with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption.

63 See Jn 6:63.

64 Lk 2:51

23. In the human growth of Jesus "in wisdom, age, and grace," the virtue of industriousness played a notable role, since "work is a human good" which "transforms nature" and makes man, "in a sense, more human."<sup>(34)</sup>

The importance of work in human life demands that its meaning be known and assimilated in order to "help all people to come closer to God, the Creator and Redeemer; to participate in His salvific plan for man and the world; and to deepen ... friendship with Christ in their lives; by accepting, through faith, a living participation in His threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King."<sup>(35)</sup>

24. What is crucially important here is the sanctification of daily life, a sanctification which each person must acquire according to his or her own state, and one which can be promoted according to a model accessible to all people: "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones whom Christianity raises up to great destinies;... he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need of great things — it is enough to have the common, simple, and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic."<sup>(36)</sup>

### V THE PRIMACY OF THE INTERIOR LIFE

25. The same aura of silence that envelops everything else about Joseph also shrouds his work as a carpenter in the house of Nazareth. It is, however, a silence that reveals in a special way the inner portrait of the man.

The Gospels speak exclusively of what Joseph "did." Still, they allow us to discover in his "actions" — shrouded in silence as they are — an aura of deep contemplation. Joseph was in daily contact with the mystery, "hidden from ages past," which "dwelt" under his roof. This explains, for example, why St. Teresa of Jesus, the great reformer of the Carmelites, promoted the renewal of veneration to St. Joseph in Western Christianity.

26. The total sacrifice whereby Joseph surrendered his whole existence to the demands of the Messiah's coming into his home becomes understandable only in the light of his profound interior life. It was from this interior life that "very singular commands and consolations came, bringing him also the logic and strength that belong to simple and clear souls, and giving him the power of making great decisions — such as the decision to put his liberty immediately at the disposition of the divine designs; to make over to them also his legitimate human calling, his conjugal happiness; to accept the conditions, the responsibility, and the burden of a family, but, through an incomparable virginal love, to renounce that natural conjugal love that is the foundation and nourishment of the family."<sup>(37)</sup>

This submission to God, this readiness of will to dedicate oneself to all that serves Him, is really nothing less than the exercise of that devotion which constitutes one expression of the virtue of religion.<sup>(38)</sup>

27. The communion of life between Joseph and Jesus leads us to consider once again the mystery of the Incarnation, in reference to the humanity of Jesus as the efficacious instrument of His divinity for the purpose of sanctifying man: "By virtue of His divinity, Christ's human actions were salvific for us, causing grace within us, either by merit or by a certain efficacy."<sup>(39)</sup>

Among those actions, the Gospel writers highlight those which have to do with the Paschal Mystery, but they also underscore the importance of physical contact with Jesus for healing<sup>65</sup> and the influence Jesus exercised upon John the Baptist when they were both in their mothers' wombs.<sup>66</sup>

As we have seen, the apostolic witness did not neglect the story of Jesus' birth, His circumcision, His presentation in the Temple, His flight into Egypt, and His hidden life in Nazareth. It recognized the "mystery" of grace present in each of

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Mk 1:41.

<sup>66</sup> See Lk 1:41-44.



these saving "acts," inasmuch as they all share the same source of love: the divinity of Christ.

If, through Christ's humanity, this love shone on all mankind, the first beneficiaries were undoubtedly those whom the divine will had most intimately associated with Itself: Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Joseph, His supposed father.(40)

Why should the fatherly love of Joseph not have had an influence upon the filial love of Jesus? And *vice versa*: why should the filial love of Jesus not have had an influence upon the fatherly love of Joseph, thus leading to a further deepening of their unique relationship? Those souls most sensitive to the impulses of divine love have rightly seen in Joseph a brilliant example of the interior life.

Furthermore, in Joseph, the apparent tension between the active and the contemplative life finds an ideal harmony that is possible only for those who possess the perfection of charity.

Following St. Augustine's well known distinction between the love of the truth (*caritas veritatis*) and the practical demands of love (*necessitas caritatis*),(41) we can say that Joseph experienced both love of the truth — that pure contemplative love of the divine Truth which radiated from the humanity of Christ — and the demands of love — that equally pure and selfless love required for his vocation to safeguard and develop the humanity of Jesus, which was inseparably linked to His divinity.

## VI PATRON OF THE CHURCH IN OUR DAY

28. At a difficult time in the Church's history, Pope Pius IX, wishing to place her under the powerful patronage of the holy patriarch Joseph, declared him "Patron of the Catholic Church."(42)

For Pius IX, this was no idle gesture, since by virtue of the sublime worth that God granted to his most faithful servant Joseph, "the Church, after the Blessed Virgin, his spouse, has always held him in great honour and showered him with praise, having recourse to him amid tribulations."(43)

What are the reasons for such great confidence? Leo XIII explained it in this way: "The reasons why St. Joseph must be considered the special patron of the Church, and the Church in turn draws exceeding hope from his care and patronage, chiefly arise from his having been the husband of Mary and the supposed father of Jesus.... Joseph was, in his day, the lawful and natural guardian, head, and defender of the Holy Family.... It is thus fitting and most becoming to his worth that, in the same way that he once kept unceasing holy watch over the family of Nazareth, so now he protects and defends with his heavenly patronage the Church of Christ."(44)

29. This patronage must be invoked as ever necessary for the Church, not only as a defence against all dangers, but also, and indeed primarily, as an impetus for her renewed commitment to evangelization in the world and to re-evangelization in those lands and nations where — as I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christideles Laici* — "religion and the Christian life formerly flourished and ... are now put to a hard test."(45)

In order to bring the first proclamation of Christ, or to bring it anew wherever it has been neglected or forgotten, the Church has need of special "power from on high":<sup>6 7</sup> a gift of the Spirit of the Lord, a gift which is not unrelated to the intercession and example of his saints.

30. Besides trusting in Joseph's sure protection, the Church also trusts in his noble example, which transcends all individual states of life and serves as a model for the entire Christian community, whatever the condition and duties of each of its members may be.

As the *Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council* says, the basic attitude of the entire Church must be that of "hearing the word of God with

reverence"(46) and an absolute readiness to serve faithfully God's salvific will revealed in Jesus. Already, at the beginning of human redemption, after Mary, we find the model of obedience made incarnate in St. Joseph, the man known for having faithfully carried out God's commands.

Pope Paul VI invited us to invoke Joseph's patronage "as the Church has been wont to do in these recent times: in the first place, for herself, with a spontaneous theological reflection on the marriage of divine and human action in the great economy of the Redemption. In this economy the first — the divine one — is wholly sufficient unto itself, while the second — the human action which is ours — though capable of nothing,<sup>67</sup> is never dispensed from a humble but conditional and ennobling collaboration. The Church also calls upon Joseph as her protector because of a profound and ever present desire to re-invigorate her ancient life with true evangelical virtues, such as shine forth in St. Joseph."(47)

31. The Church transforms these needs into prayer. Recalling that God wished to entrust the beginnings of our redemption to the faithful care of St. Joseph, she asks God to grant that she may faithfully co-operate in the work of salvation; that she may receive the same faithfulness and purity of heart that inspired Joseph in serving the Incarnate Word; and that she may walk before God in the ways of holiness and justice, following Joseph's example and through his intercession.(48)

One hundred years ago, Pope Leo XIII exhorted the Catholic world to pray for the protection of St. Joseph, Patron of the whole Church. The Encyclical *Quamquam Pluries* appealed to Joseph's "fatherly love ... for the Child Jesus" and commended to him, as "the provident guardian of the divine Family," "the beloved inheritance which Jesus Christ purchased by His blood."

Since that time — as I recalled at the beginning of this Exhortation — the Church has implored the protection of St. Joseph on the basis of "that sacred bond of charity which united him to the immaculate Virgin Mother of God," and has commended to Joseph all of her cares, including those dangers that threaten the human family.

Even today, we have many reasons to pray in a similar way: "Most beloved father, dispel the evil of falsehood and sin ... graciously assist us from Heaven in our struggle with the powers of darkness ... and just as once you saved the Child Jesus from mortal danger, so now defend God's holy Church from the snares of her enemies and from all adversity."(49) Today we still have good reason to commend everyone to St. Joseph.

32. It is my heartfelt wish that these reflections on the person of St. Joseph will renew in us the prayerful devotion which my predecessor called for a century ago. Our prayers and the very person of Joseph have renewed significance for the Church in our day in light of the third Christian millennium.

The Second Vatican Council made all of us sensitive once again to the "great things that God has done" and to that "economy of salvation" of which St. Joseph was a special minister. Commending ourselves, then, to the protection of him to whose custody God "entrusted His greatest and most precious treasures,"(50) let us at the same time learn from him how to be servants of the "economy of salvation."

May St. Joseph become for all of us an exceptional teacher in the service of Christ's saving mission — a mission which is the responsibility of every member of the Church: husbands and wives, parents, those who live by the work of their hands or by any other kind of work, those called to the contemplative life, and those called to the apostolate.

This just man, who bore within himself the entire heritage of the Old Covenant, was also brought into the "beginning" of the new and eternal Covenant in Jesus Christ. May he show us the paths of this saving Covenant as we stand at the threshold of the next millennium, in which there must be a continuation and further development of the "fullness of time" to which belongs the ineffable mystery of the

67 See Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8.

68 See Jn 15:5.

## Incarnation of the Word.

May St. Joseph obtain for the Church and for the world, as well as for each of us, the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Given at Rome, in St. Peter's, on August 15  
— the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary —  
in the year 1989,  
the eleventh of my Pontificate.*

John Paul II

## Endnotes

- 1 See St. Irenaeus: *Adversus haereses*, IV, 23, 1.
- 2 Leo XIII: *Quamquam pluries*
- 3 Sacrorum Rituum Congregationis: *Quemadmodum Deus*; Pius IX: *Inclytum Patriarcham*
- 4 See St. John Chrysostom, *In Matth. Hom. V*, 3. The Fathers of the Church and the Popes, on the basis of their common name, also saw in Joseph of Egypt a prototype of Joseph of Nazareth, inasmuch as the former foreshadowed in some way the ministry and greatness of the latter, who was guardian of God the Father's most precious treasures — the Incarnate Word and His most holy Mother. See, for example, St. Bernard: *Super "Missus est," Hom. II*, 16; Leo XIII: *Quamquam pluries*.
- 5 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 58.
- 6 See *ibid.*, 63.
- 7 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 5.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 9 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 63.
- 10 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 2.
- 11 Sacred Congregation of Rites: *Novis Hisce Temporibus*.
- 12 St. Augustine: *Sermo* 51, 10, 16.
- 13 St. Augustine: *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, I, 11, 12. See *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, II, 1, 2; *Contra Faustum*, III, 2.
- 14 St. Augustine: *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, I, 11, 13.
- 15 See St. Augustine: *Contra Faustum*, XXIII, 8; *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, II, 1, 3; *Sermo*, 51, 13, 21; St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 29, a. 2.
- 16 See Discourses of January 9, 16; February 20, 1980: *Insegnamenti*, III/I.
- 17 Paul VI: Discourse to the "Equipes Notre-Dame" Movement, 7. Similar praise of the Family of Nazareth as a perfect example of domestic life can be found, for example, in Leo XIII: *Neminem Fugit*; Benedict XV: *Motu Proprio Bonum Sane*.
- 18 *Familiaris Consortio*, 17
- 19 *Ibid.*, 49. See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 11; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.
- 20 *Familiaris Consortio*, 85.
- 21 See St. John Chrysostom: *In Matth. Hom. V*, 3.
- 22 Paul VI: Discourse March 19 1966; *Insegnamenti*, IV (1966).
- 23 See the Roman Missal: Collect for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- 24 See *ibid.*: Preface for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- 25 Leo XIII, *Quamquam pluries*.
- 26 Pius XII: Radio Message to Catholic School Students in the United States of America February 19, 1958.
- 27 Origen: *Hom. XIII in Lucam*, 728 Origen: *Hom. XI in Lucam*, 6
- 29 See Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer I.
- 30 Sacrorum Rituum Congregation: *Quemadmodum Deus*.
- 31 *Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine*: 1, Preface
- 32 *Familiaris Consortio*, 16
- 33 Leo XIII: *Quamquam pluries*.
- 34 See *Laborem Exercens*, 9.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 24. In recent times, the Popes have constantly presented St. Joseph as the "model" of workers and laborers. See, for example, Leo XIII: *Quamquam pluries*; Benedict XV: *Bonum Sane*; Pius XII: Discourse March 11 1945, 4; Discourse May 1 1955).
- 36 Paul VI: Discourse March 19 1969): *Insegnamenti*, VII
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 See St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.
- 39 *Ibid.*, III, q. 8, a. 1, ad 1.
- 40 See Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, III.
- 41 See St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, q. 182, a. 1, ad 3.
- 42 See Sacrorum Rituum Congregation: *Quemadmodum Deus*.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 Leo XIII: *Quamquam pluries*
- 45 *Christifidele Laici*, 34
- 46 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 1
- 47 Paul VI: Discourse March 19 1969, *Insegnamenti*
- 48 See Roman Missal: Collect and Prayer over the Gifts for the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Prayer after Communion from the Votive Mass of St. Joseph.
- 49 See Leo XIII: *Oratio ad Sanctum Iosephum*, at the end of *Quamquam pluries*
- 50 Sacrorum Rituum Congregation, *Quemadmodum Deus*

## Appendix 5

## Devotion to St. Joseph

**Introduction**

According to the US National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, *San Jose* ("St. Joseph") is the most common place name in the world. However, devotion to Joseph developed slowly in the Church.

**Universal Church**

Mass was celebrated in his honour as early as the 10th century, and by 1479 March 19 was his feastday in the Roman calendar. In 1570, Pius V extended the feast to the whole Latin Rite.

In 1714, Clement XI wrote a proper office for Joseph in the Roman Breviary. In 1729, Benedict XIII put his name in the Litany of Saints. In 1870, Pius IX declared him patron of the universal Church and the "Patronage of St. Joseph" became a feast.

In 1889, in *Quamquam Pluries* (on St. Joseph), Leo XIII wrote a prayer to Joseph to be added to the Rosary during October (see Appendix 3) and he declared March the month of Joseph, as May is the month of Mary and June of the Sacred Heart.

Pius X approved a Litany of St. Joseph in 1909, and Benedict XV wrote a proper preface for his feasts in 1919. In 1920, Benedict urged that Joseph be invoked on Wednesdays, especially as patron of a happy death.

In 1930, Pius XI made Joseph protector of Russia, and in 1955, Pius XII replaced the "Patronage of St. Joseph" with "St. Joseph the Worker" — May 1, International Workers' Day.

John XXIII entrusted the Second Vatican Council to Joseph March 19 1961. To give "new splendour" to Joseph's altar in St. Peter's, he commissioned a mosaic three metres high and blessed it March 19 1963. He also added Joseph's name to the Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer I) November 13 1962. Pope Francis added it to the other Eucharistic Prayers May 1 2013.

Benedict XVI entrusted "all pastors" to Joseph December 19 2010. We "venerate the legal father of Jesus," he said, because St. Paul's "new man takes form in him."

**Canadian connection**

Father Joseph Le Caron, one of the first four missionaries to Canada, wrote March 19 1624 that they had chosen Joseph "Patron of New France," and Joseph is now Canada's principal patron.

In 1911, Pius X approved a motion by the First Plenary Council of Québec to include Joseph in the Divine Praises; at the request of Bishop Émile Grouard OMI of Athabasca, Benedict XV mandated it for the whole Church in 1923.

St. Joseph's Oratory in Montréal is the largest church in Canada, and its dome is the largest of its kind in the world after St. Peter's in Rome.

In a prayer addressed to St. Joseph at his Oratory in Montréal September 11 1984, Pope John Paul II said, "You gave to Jesus legal paternity in the line of David." Five years later, he made the same point in *Redemptoris Custos* — "On the Person and Mission of Saint Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church." (See Appendix 4.)