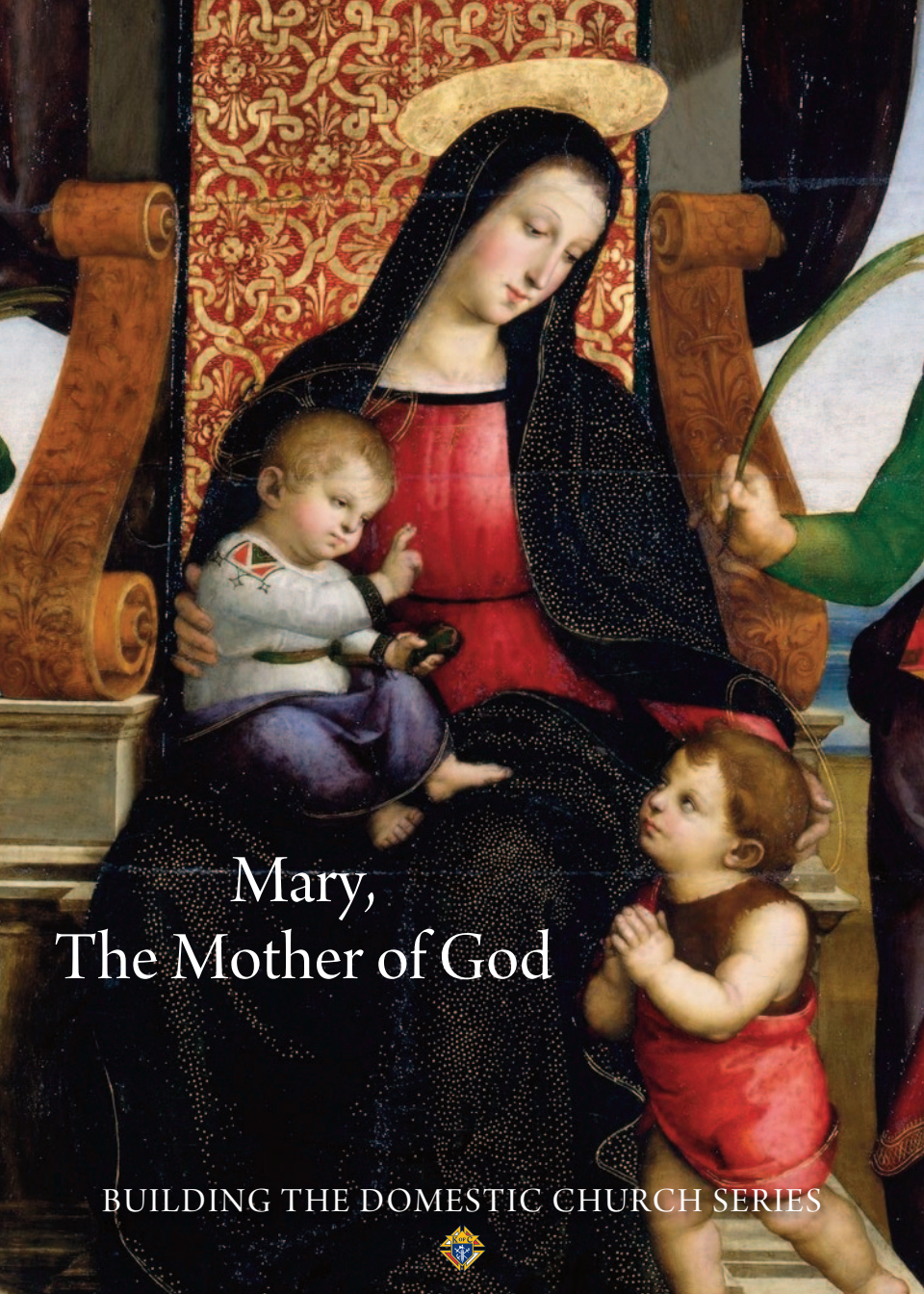

Mary, The Mother of God

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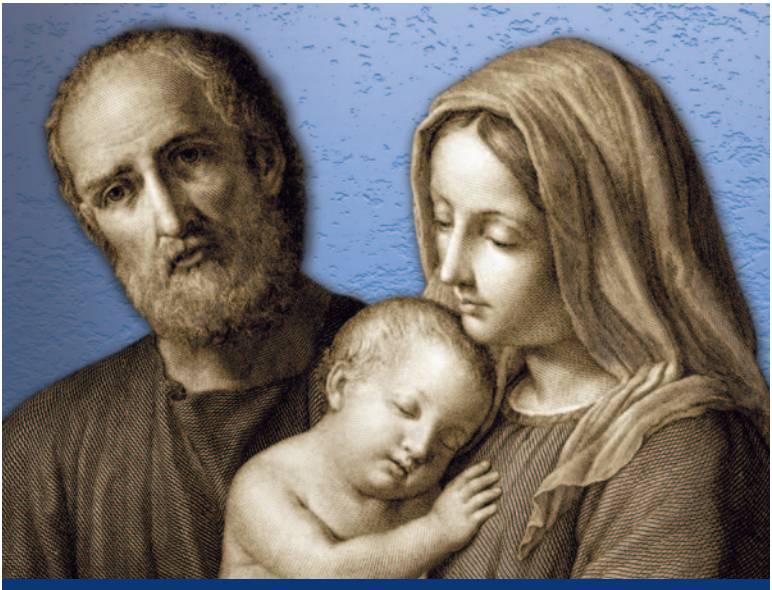

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Mary, The Mother of God

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Mary,
The Mother of God

Back in the year A.D. 429, a sermon was preached in the city of Constantinople. The preacher said: “Let no one call Mary the mother of God. Mary was a woman and a woman cannot give birth to God.” These strange words caused considerable commotion among the people of Constantinople, especially when such doctrine was upheld by a man named Nestorius — their bishop. He refused to call Mary the mother of God because he did not believe God and Jesus Christ are one and the same person. He held them to be two distinct persons, marvelously united, indeed, but so distinct that the man Christ came into existence when he was born of Mary, whereas God had existed for all eternity. No matter how much he extolled the intimacy of the union between the man Christ and God, for Nestorius they were two different persons. Mary was the mother of a man — a mere man.

All this sounded strange to Catholic ears then, as it would today. It caused deep disturbance to the Christian faith of the people. So to meet the emergency, two years later, the bishops of the Catholic Church in council assembled in the city of Ephesus, made clear to all what had been the faith of Christians before them, and what was to be the faith of Christians from then on. “Jesus Christ is truly God,” they declared, “and consequently the Holy Virgin is the mother of God — inasmuch as she gave birth in the flesh to the Word of God made flesh, according to what is written: ‘the Word was made flesh.’” As far as Christians were concerned, there should be no further doubt.

It was evident then and it is evident today that the snare into which they inevitably fall who refuse to call Mary the mother of God is the division of Christ — the dissolution of Christ into something like “Jesus-man” and “Jesus-God” — the “heavenly Jesus” and the

"earthly Jesus." And according to the Apostle John: "Every spirit that severs Jesus is not of God" (1 John 4:3). Consciously or unconsciously, they must make him a human person if they insist that Mary was the mother of mere man.

The answer to the question: "Was Mary the mother of God?" is found in the question "Who and what was Jesus Christ?" The two questions are as inseparable as are Mary and her Son. The Catholic answer always has been clear and consistent — consistent with the demands of right reason and with the facts to be found in the New Testament.

CHRIST IS GOD

What are these facts? They can be stated briefly as follows: In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is spoken of as God and he is expressly called God. He is likewise spoken of as a real man and called man. The obvious meaning is that he was a divine person who possessed the nature of God and the nature of man. Not that the nature of God became human or that the nature of man became divine.They remained distinct, but in him they were united because they were possessed by one and the same person, Jesus Christ.

It is not difficult or irrelevant to verify these facts in the Scripture. Jesus Christ is expressly called "God" in a number of passages. After his resurrection, when he appeared to his Apostles and reproached the doubting Thomas for his lack of faith, "Thomas answered and said to him: 'My Lord, and my God'"(John 20:28). It is plain that Thomas desired to proclaim his faith not only in the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, but also in the divinity of his person, for which the resurrection furnished such a final argument. In this sense, Jesus replied to him: "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Writing to Titus (2:12), Saint Paul plainly calls Christ God when he urges Christians to "live temperately and justly and piously in

this world; looking for the blessed hope and glorious coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity." It will be noted that he is not speaking of two different persons but he means solely Christ who is both "our great God" and our "Savior."

The Apostle John made himself abundantly clear when he wrote: "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, that we may know the true God and may be in his true Son. He is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

There could not be a more explicit statement than the words of Saint Paul referring to Christ as him "who is over all things, God blessed forever" (Romans 9:5).

But not only is Jesus Christ called God in the Scriptures, he is likewise given characteristics which God alone can possess and is reported as performing actions which would be possible to God alone. So numerous are these passages that we shall mention only a few that are more obvious. God alone is omnipotent and only he, because of his omnipotence, can create. Yet speaking of Christ, Saint Paul could say: "all things have been created through him" (Colossians 1:16). And "one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things" (1 Corinthians 8:6). And Saint John wrote: "Without him was made nothing that has been made" (John 1:3).

Only God is eternal, yet Christ himself claimed to have existed before Abraham, who had lived and died centuries before the Savior was born (John 8:58) . He even claimed to have pre-existed the world itself (John 17:6).

It should not be surprising, therefore, that Christ required men to give him the honor which is due to God alone (John 5:22) and that he made promises which God alone could fulfill: "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14).

It is not our intention here to multiply passages from the New Testament which serve to establish and confirm the fact that Jesus Christ was truly God.

CHRIST IS MAN

The New Testament is equally emphatic in asserting another fact. Jesus Christ was as red-blooded a man as ever lived. The story of his life and of his dealings with other people is reported in detail. After his resurrection, when he met his followers, he challenged them: "'Why are you disturbed and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet, that it is I myself. Feel me, and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have,' and having said this, he showed them his hands and feet...and he ate in their presence" (Luke 24:38-43). These are the words of the one who had been crucified, who had lived, ate, and slept with them, who had worked in Nazareth, and who as an infant had been laid in a manger. He used the most simple and cogent argument possible. "You did not doubt that I was a real live man during the years that we lived together. Now do not doubt, for seeing and feeling is believing."

Only those who would undermine all true history deny that the historical man Jesus Christ was a real person. But the same sources which justify the acknowledgement of Jesus as a real historical man also justify the acknowledgement of him as a divine person with all the attributes of God.

It is from the Scriptures that we learn — "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us...the Word was God" and the Word was Jesus Christ; "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ and of his fullness we have all received" (John 1:1-18).

Referring to Jesus Christ, Saint Paul spoke of him as one "who though he was by nature God, did not consider being equal to God a thing to be clung to, but emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave and being made like unto man. And appearing in the form of

man, he humbled himself...even to the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). There you have it! He who was God by reason of his divine nature, became man by taking unto himself human nature.

THE CORE OF CHRISTIANITY

Is there any indication in all this that the New Testament speaks of a Jesus-God who was distinct from a Jesus-man, or that Mary was the mother of one Jesus and that we were redeemed by another?

When we answer the question "Who was Mary's Son?" and base our response on what the Scriptures tell us, there is only one answer possible. He was a divine person possessing the nature of God and the nature of man. His two natures with their distinctive powers do not make him two different persons. He is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, true God and true man. This is the fact of the Incarnation.

It is the central fact of Christianity. It is the basic truth — the very core — of the Christian Creed. Christians have been talking about it for centuries and it was soon learned that when we use human language in speaking of Jesus Christ, we must use it cautiously and interpret it carefully.

God — a divine person — took unto himself a human body with the same structure and functions as the human body which each of us knows so well. He took unto himself a human soul, a human mind, human feelings and emotions, no different from those with which we are endowed at birth. And he did not thereby cease to be God whose nature is entirely spiritual, into whose make-up nothing bodily enters, whose will power is omnipotent, whose mind is omniscient, and whose life had no beginning and will have no end. The Scripture simply states it: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (John 1:14).

The overpowering significance of this fact begins to dawn on us when we reflect that *all that is true of God and all that is true of man is true of this one person, Jesus Christ. Whatever is true of his divine nature and whatever is true of his human nature must be asserted of him — Jesus Christ*. He is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal. And it is equally true that he is mortal, limited in his physical powers, capable of fatigue and pain, subject to growth in bodily stature and human knowledge.

This does not mean that the divine nature became human or that the infallible mind of God became fallible, or that the immortal nature of God became subject to death. The divine was in no way changed into the human. But it does mean that a divine person possessed human nature and, if human language is to express the truth, whatever happened to him in his human nature must be truly asserted of him.

THE NEW TESTAMENT MAKES SENSE

With this in mind, we can begin to see that what may appear to be contradictory in certain passages of the New Testament really makes sense. Of course, Christ could say of himself on one occasion: “for the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), and on another: “I and the Father are one” (Luke 10:30). By reason of his human nature, he was truly subject to God and could pray to the heavenly Father of all. And by reason of the same divine nature which both he and the Father possess, he is equal to the Father and one with him.

By reason of natural human frailty, he could sweat blood at the prospect of his death and by reason of the omnipotence of his divine nature, he could raise the dead to life with a word.

Thus the Apostle Peter was not guilty of a wild absurdity when he accused the people: “you killed the author of life” (Acts 3:15). Nor was Saint Paul uttering an absurdity when he wrote about those who “crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8). They

crucified and killed Jesus Christ who was the Author of life, the immortal Creator, according to his divine nature, but who could die in his mortal human nature.

It should be obvious, then, that if it was not absurd for Peter, referring to Jesus Christ, to speak of those who killed the Author of life — God, it is not absurd when, speaking of Jesus Christ, we say: "God was circumcised — God was lost by his parents — God grew in wisdom and stature — God was weary and slept."

BORN OF A WOMAN

Still less absurd was Saint Paul when he told of the coming of Christ, the Redeemer, in these words: "When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law that he might redeem those who were under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). The Son of God was *born of a woman*. The Word, who was God, became man and dwelt among us by being born of a woman. The Lord, who was God, and who redeemed us by dying on the cross, was born of a woman. The woman was Mary, mother of the Word, mother of God.

Many, however, who speak freely of Mary as the mother of Jesus, hesitate to call her the mother of God. They do not understand the full meaning of the Incarnation. There is no good reason why a divine person, Jesus Christ, who is truly a man could not be conceived and born according to this human nature. This would not mean that his mother, like some kind of goddess, would bring his divine nature into existence. Still less would it mean that as the mother of a divine person, she existed before him. Christ asserted that he existed before Abraham was born. As God, he was eternal; as man, he began to live a human life when Mary conceived him. Mary did not exist before God, but she existed before God took human nature in her womb.

If it is not absurd that the divine person, Jesus Christ, owed his human life to Mary as his mother, it is not absurd that her father

was related to him as a grandfather. Did God have a grandfather? Asked without any reference to Jesus Christ, this question is plainly absurd. But referring to Jesus Christ, the affirmative answer is gospel truth.

The Virgin Mary

Some people cannot bring themselves to admit that Mary was really the mother of God because they fail to realize that nothing was lacking in her *maternal* functions in conceiving and bearing Jesus Christ. As her son, he owed as much to her as any son owes his mother.

Her maternal relationship to Christ was a real and person-to-person relationship — a blood relationship by reason of which Christ was a member of her family, of her nation and of the whole human race.

"But you tell us she remained a virgin," some will say. "Surely if she did not lose her virginity in conceiving Christ, she was not his mother in the ordinary sense of the term."

It must be remembered that the manner in which Mary conceived Christ is one thing and the fact that she really conceived him is another. The absence of a human father in the conception of Christ accounts for her virginity remaining intact, but the reality of her maternal role in conceiving him was not thereby affected. A careful examination of the facts as they are given in the first chapter of Saint Luke's Gospel will bear this out.

There are many significant details in the story of the angel's visit with Mary when her consent to become the mother of the Savior was obtained. For the present purpose, attention is given only to those which bear on the essential facts of the Incarnation.

It should be noted that it is God who plays the dominant role in the story. The Angel Gabriel is nothing more than a messenger of God. "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God...to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph...and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-28). It is understandable that a humble maiden like Mary would be puzzled and filled with wonder at the honor and

reverence which the messenger from God showed her in saluting her as "blessed among women." Why was she worthy of such reverence? The reason is at once supplied: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus" (God who saves) — a name indicating his life's work, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

GOD'S PLAN FOR MARY

The angel proclaimed great and glorious things of the son who would be born of her, but this did not trouble Mary. She simply believed and accepted them as the design of God. Her concern was not *can* this be done, but "*How* shall this happen, since I do not know man?" More is contained in this answer than at first meets the eye.

She was espoused to Joseph and her espousal meant the exchange of marriage vows. Had there been nothing unusual about her espousal, had she not resolved to preserve her virginity, the message of the angel would have indicated that she was to cooperate with the designs of God in the natural manner and thus become a mother. And yet, she, an espoused virgin, stated in effect that even God's plan in her regard could not be fulfilled by sexual intercourse with man.

The angel overcame this difficulty by explaining at once that the conception of Jesus would take place not through intercourse with man, but by the power of God. As a virgin, and with her virginity intact, she would conceive and become a mother.

All anxiety concerning her cherished virginity removed, she consented simply and wholeheartedly and the angel left her, his mission accomplished. The Word had become man and dwelt among us. The Incarnation had taken place. When she said: "Let it be done to me according to thy word," the Son of God took flesh in her womb.

Throughout this extraordinary event, as narrated by Luke, evidently with information which he obtained from Mary herself, there is no thought or mention of Joseph, her husband. In fact, both the angel and Mary expressly exclude all intervention of man. In Matthew's account, it *is explicitly stated that Jesus was not the son of Joseph*.

The two important and undeniable facts which stand out in the Gospel narrative are Mary's conception of the Son of God and her retention of her virginity. Let us first consider the beginning of Mary's pregnancy when she first contracted the person-to-person maternal relationship with the Son of God.

It is a universally admitted principle that a woman is rightly called the mother of the child which she conceives. The first act of her maternal role is to furnish, by means of her female organs, the ovum capable of developing into a human body. This alone does not make her a mother, but only a potential mother. The ovum is not a human person.

The paternal function of supplying the seed which fecundates the ovum is likewise required. But the process of fecundation alone does not cause the ovum to become a human person. Neither maternal nor paternal functions can possibly transmit the spiritual soul without which there is no such thing as human nature or a human person.

In the natural and normal process of human reproduction, when both maternal and paternal functions unite, God simultaneously creates the human soul which enlivens the fecundated ovum in the woman's womb, and thus a human person is conceived. It is always an individual's human nature — a person who possesses human nature.

It matters not that the woman has no part in the production of the spiritual element (directly created by God) in the human nature of the person she conceives. It suffices that she has supplied the

bodily substance which goes into the constitution of human nature possessed by the person, that she rightly acquires the title of mother.

MOTHER OF A DIVINE SON

Mary could well be praised by the angel as "blessed among women" because of the marvelous title which would be hers when she conceived Jesus Christ. She was not merely the mother of a son, but the mother of a divine Son. The ovum which she furnished was miraculously fecundated in her womb by the power of God. Simultaneously, the human nature, composed of body and soul, began to exist and was possessed by the Son of God who made it his own. Mary beame his mother when the embryonic body of Christ was enlivened by his human soul and at that instant he began his human life in her womb. This took place when she consented to the message brought from God by the angel and thereupon she had every right and title to be called the mother of God.

It should be evident that Mary's motherhood did not, by any stretch of the imagination, have anything to do with the "production of God." The very idea is inherently absurd. The utter independence of the Supreme Being rules out any "production" as far as he is concerned. But Mary could, and really did, give to the divine person who became a man in her womb the human flesh that made him a child who is born of her. She thereby contracted a person-to-person relationship with him, a blood relationship, identical with that which exists between every mother and son.

Mary's maternal functions in conceiving Christ were natural, normal and in no way miraculous. The miracle in the conception of Christ was the absence of a human father in whose place the power of God actively caused her preganancy without sexual relations of any kind. This miraculous operation of God simultaneously preserved her virginity and made her a mother. Thus her maternal

functions were not mysterious, but the divine action in the place of paternal functions certainly was.

A MIRACULOUS EVENT

That Mary, remaining a virgin, conceived Jesus Christ through the power of God is flatly miraculous. "Its challenge today," writes Walter Farrell, O.P., "is a part of the universal challenge to the supernatural. The challenge is not made in the name of the progress of science, though it is under that heading that many reject it today; rather, it is made in the name of the decadence of Faith. There is no scientific question involved here at all; for the point at issue is not what a secondary cause (a creature) in the physical order can do, but rather what the first cause (God) can do. Philosophically, the possibility of this miraculous virginity represents no difficulty whatever. If the natural father operates by virtue of the first cause (God) as everything must, then surely the first cause (God) can produce the same effect without the natural father...God can do anything which he has put within the power of his creatures."

The critics of the miraculous cannot reasonably deny God the power which he has given to his creatures or demand that God's actions follow the manner of his creatures' actions. The possibility of Mary's virginal conception of Christ is plain; the fact is to be accepted by the faith of those who are willing to believe the angel: "Nothing shall be impossible with God."

But even when Mary's virginal conception of Christ is granted, there remains the question: Why was it necessary?

The Son of God could have come into the world with a human nature and dwelt among us without the preliminaries of conception, birth, childhood, and the rest. Yet, had he done so, there would unquestionably have remained lingering doubts about how real his manhood, and therefore his death and resurrection, actually were.

It was to obviate such doubts that he was born even as we are born.

But why was it necessary for Mary to remain a virgin?

"Let us imagine," writes Hugh Pope, "the Blessed Virgin as just an ordinary matron with several children, one of whom suddenly announces that he is the Messias. It is easy to picture the resentment of the rest. Supposing now, that he claims to be the Redeemer of the world. His brethren would naturally ask how he, a mere man and himself needing redemption, could possibly do this. He would have to explain that he was God made man. But to this they could effectively retort. 'You were born, for you are a man, whatever else you may claim to be' and they could logically insist that if born, he, like all others, fell under the curse inflicted on Adam and his descendants and consequently, needed redemption himself. What other answer could he give, save that their argument was unanswerable, unless he were born of a virgin?"

As the sole human parent of Jesus Christ, Mary brought him into the world as a member of her family descended from David as had been prophesied of old, as a member of the Jewish nation and as a member of the human race descended from Adam. If all of us are brothers and sisters (as we surely are), by being born of Mary Jesus Christ has every right to be numbered among us. But by being born of a virgin, *Jesus Christ was not of the seed of Adam*. The absence of a human father meant that at his conception, he was not even liable to inherit Original Sin and he did not even need to be preserved from inheriting it. He who was the Savior from sin did not, in any sense, need to be saved from sin.

But once the fact that Mary was actually the virgin mother of God is understood, her place in the divine plan of man's redemption through Christ becomes apparent. She is more than a minor accessory in the working out of the divine plan, whose usefulness can be quickly recognized and then dropped out of

sight and disregarded. Almighty God did not honor her by making her the mother of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity without expecting that we should likewise honor her. It was not without reason that she was included in the oldest summary of the bare essentials of Christian Faith which we call the Apostles' Creed: "Jesus Christ...who was born of the Virgin Mary."

Mary, then, is really and truly the mother of God. What human respect can be too great to honor her who is so intimately related with God himself? God could bestow a greater dignity on a woman only by giving her a greater son than he gave Mary. That is impossible!

Behold Your Mother

Do you think of Mary as a woman whose name has come down to us in history merely because she chanced to be the mother of Jesus Christ, the greatest historical personage of all time? Is that all she means to us in this day and age? Or does Mary's role as the mother of Christ have a practical relationship to us?

In considering this question, we cannot afford to lose sight of *who Christ was* — the Son of God made man; but equally important is *why he became man* — the fulfillment of God's promise to save his people from their sins. That means us. We may, of course, consider these questions and their answers separately in our minds; in reality, however, they are but different phases of the one unified plan of our redemption. If Mary was associated with Christ in working out our redemption by his death on the cross, *Mary has an important relation to you and me in the world today*.

Is it the correct and proper Christian belief and practice to acknowledge that Mary was the mother of Jesus — a humble and pious Jewish woman—and that is all? The New Testament records her visit with Elizabeth, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, her part in the miraculous changing of water into wine at Cana, her presence at the foot of the cross on which Christ died, and with the Apostles in the upper room on Pentecost. But, it may be asked, what does all that have to do with our salvation? Did not Saint Paul speak of Jesus Christ as the one Mediator between man and God? Did not Peter claim that there is only one name in which we are saved — Jesus Christ? Did not Christ himself rebuke Mary on several occasions for meddling in his work when he was about his Father's business? Should we not therefore relegate Mary to the background, lest in honoring her, we defraud Christ of his rightful honor?

These questions will possibly reflect the attitude of some of our readers and we mention them here to indicate that we are aware of their point of view. According to Catholics, this point of view is wrong.

Such an attitude toward Mary certainly has not been the historical attitude of Christians in the Catholic Church from the earliest times down to the present day. It is not based on the indications which the Scripture gives us concerning what our attitude toward Mary should be, as this has been explained by the living voice of the Church since the days of the Apostles.

THE CHURCH INTERPRETS THE BIBLE

Catholics get their information concerning Mary — not from the Church teaching us as though the Bible did not exist, but from the Church teaching the full significance of what the Bible says about Mary.

By her consent to become the mother of God's Son, Mary freely associated herself with the Son of God in the redemption of all mankind — and that includes everyone reading these words.

Jesus was to be the Savior of sinful men and women, the Messias promised to all, the King of redeemed mankind. Mary was asked, therefore, to associate herself in the attainment of the purpose of the Son of God in becoming man—the salvation of sinners, in the mission of the Messias, and in the founding of the kingdom announced by the Angel Gabriel.

In the visit of God's messenger with Mary, the redemptive work of Christ was arranged and this concerned all mankind. There is no room for the idea that Mary consented to be the mother of Jesus merely as a private person, or that she had no relationship to him as a public person and the Redeemer of man.

By the very fact that Mary was allowed voluntarily to cooperate with God when he sent his Son born of woman, she was thereby

associated in the accomplishment of the purpose for which he came. In consenting to give human flesh to the Son of God and bringing him into the world, did she not, in her own way, give the Redeemer to the world? If God our Father gave us his only begotten Son as our Redeemer, did he not do so through Mary?

But is all this found only in a short passage in the first chapter of Saint Luke's Gospel and not even hinted elsewhere in the written word of God? By no means! Let us begin with Saint Paul. Besides referring to Jesus Christ as the Son of God born of a woman, he also called him the "second Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45-47) and there is a world of meaning in that title and it concerns not only Jesus Christ, but Mary as well.

When Saint Paul spoke of Jesus as the "second Adam," he opened up a whole new aspect of the Savior and his work. He expressed what had been revealed to him about God's plan of man's redemption. According to Saint Paul, Christ is the second Adam who restored to mankind what was lost to mankind by the first Adam, the father of the human race. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made to live" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

The similarity between Adam and Christ may be said to lie generally in the relation which they both bore to the whole human race as its father and its Redeemer. The contrast between them lies in the different conduct and effects of each. The disobedience of the first brought the loss of God's friendship and death upon all. The obedience of the second restored that friendship and the kind of spiritual life which pleases God.

EVE AND MARY

Saint Paul's comparison of Christ with Adam, founded as it is on the account of man's fall in Genesis, necessarily demands a comparison between the woman who is predicted there as the antagonist of Satan, who would give birth to the promised Redeemer, and Eve, who was associated with Adam in the fall.

Catholic commentaries on the Scripture, including those composed by authors who lived a few generations removed from Christ and his Apostles, have called attention to the remarkable similarity between the part of a woman — Eve — in the original fall and loss of God's friendship through Adam, and the part of a woman — Mary — in Christ's restoration of that friendship to all.

Saint Justin, who lived from about 110 to 165, writes, "For whereas Eve, yet a virgin and undefiled, through conceiving the word that came from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death; the Virgin Mary, taking faith and joy, when the Angel told her the good tidings *that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadow her, and therefore, the Holy One to be born of her should be the Son of God, answered, Be it done to me according to thy word*. And so by means of her was he born, concerning whom we have shown so many Scriptures were spoken; through whom God overthrows the serpent, and those angels and men who have become like to it, and, on the other hand, works deliverance from death for such as repent of their evil doings and believe in Him" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 100).

The full meaning and the exact extent of the similarity which the Scripture says exists between the fall of our first parents and its reparation by Jesus Christ, is especially important if we are to understand that the role of Mary in the reparation was designed by God to be similar to the role of the first woman in the original transgression.

By reading Genesis 3, it can be seen that Eve had an essential place in the fall of mankind. It is true that the fate of the human race was in Adam's hands (Romans 5:12). Only he represented us and could prevent or cause our downfall. Yet Eve had a place of her own; for Adam named her "the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20) — a name that expressed not only a fact, but also a dignity. As she had her own general relation to the whole human race, so

also she had her own role in its trial and fall in Adam. “The woman was deceived and was in sin” (1 Timothy 2:14). She listened to the tempter and she cooperated not as an irresponsible agent, but intimately and personally in the sin. In her way, she brought sin into the world and she had her share in its punishment.

In that awful event, three parties were concerned — the evil spirit in the form of a serpent, the first woman and the first man. And when their punishment was announced, an event to take place in the distant future was also announced, an event which the three parties (the serpent, the woman and the man) were to foreshadow: her seed. But it was to be a second Adam and a second Eve and she was to be the mother of the new Adam. God promised to put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her seed. There would be complete victory for the woman and her seed over the serpent. The seed of the woman is Jesus Christ, the new Adam; and Mary, his mother, is the new Eve.

EARLY CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

Irenaeus, a Christian scholar who was born about A.D. 130 and who had been taught the Christian faith by a disciple of the Apostle John, records what was the early Christian under-standing of Mary’s part in the redemption as compared with Eve’s part in the fall.

Irenaeus was familiar with those who had been close both to Peter and to Paul and who “had still the preaching of the blessed Apostles ringing in their ears.” He testifies that the same preaching of the truth which the Church received from the Apostles had come down to him, and consequently “one and the very same life-giving faith had been preserved in the Church and was handed down in its purity and integrity from the Apostles even to his own day” (*Against Heresies* 3, 3).

“As Eve was seduced,” he wrote, “by the speech of an angel, so as to flee God in transgressing his word, so also Mary received the good tidings by means of the angel’s speech, so as to bear

God within her, being obedient to this word. And, though the one had disobeyed God, yet the other was drawn to obey him; that of the virgin Eve, the virgin Mary might become the advocate and, as by a virgin the human race had been bound to death, by a virgin it is saved, the balance being preserved — a virgin's disobedience by a virgin's obedience" (*Against Heresies*, 3, 19).

ROLES OF EVE AND MARY

We have said that Eve had an essential part in the original sin. Exactly how she was involved needs to be examined more closely.

It was Adam's sole responsibility that the state of sin is inherited by all mankind. He, not Eve, was the head of the human family. Had Eve alone fallen, their posterity would have been unaffected. Had she remained faithful, while Adam alone sinned, the state of sin would have descended upon all men and women.

As things actually happened, Adam was incited to sin by the urging of Eve. By her persuasion, she brought to pass the whole unfortunate affair; and in this way, it can be attributed to her. So while it is true that Adam is the author of the ruin caused solely by his sin, yet because of her cooperation, the whole thing can be truly attributed to her suggestion and instigation.

Now let us look at Mary's part in our redemption, as it actually took place.

Jesus Christ is the sole author of the redemption, and his redeeming death alone satisfied for the sins of all mankind. It was the entire, fully sufficient, and even more than abundant cause of our justification in the eyes of God, our sanctification and salvation. Had he come into the world without any human being having been associated with him in any way, our redemption would have been completely effected. Had he not offered himself as a sacrifice for us, all that Mary or anyone else could do would not have been adequate to reconcile us with God.

Thus the fact that Mary was associated with him in the redemption as it actually took place, adds nothing to his sacrifice. We can become the friends of God solely because of the merits of Jesus Christ. This is what the Catholic Church always has taught and believed.

But Mary had a part in our redemption and the Bible provides us with the facts. The first Eve by her part in the fall ruined us by knowingly inciting Adam to sin. The second Eve, Mary, saved us by her part in the redemption which was her consent to become the mother of the Son of God who came to save his people from their sins.

Jesus Christ was our sole Redeemer, the one Mediator between man and God, who reconciled us with God. Nonetheless, Mary was associated with the Mediator in the divine plan and played her part — an essential part — just as Eve had participated in the fall.

MARY'S CONSENT

But why say that Mary's part was essential? Read the first chapter of Saint Luke's Gospel, and you will observe that the Angel Gabriel did not visit Mary simply to announce what was to take place; he sought her consent. In God's design, therefore, her consent was necessary. Why was it sought, if it was not necessary?

Why was her consent sought? Among other reasons, because her consent made the Reparation similar to the Fall. By his proud disobedience, Adam had ruined the whole human race; so Jesus Christ, the second Adam, by his humble obedience, saved mankind. As Eve, by her counsel, had cooperated in Adam's disobedience, so Mary, the second Eve, by her consent, cooperated in the redemption which he won on the cross. The first woman had prompted the fall by listening to the suggestion of the rebel angel, so the second Eve consented to the proposal of our

redemption made by the faithful angel who had come to her from God.

God in his infinite goodness and love, designed our redemption and the way in which it would take place. To his love we acknowledge ourselves entirely indebted. But we also see that according to the plan of his love, the Eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, became man and sacrificed himself for us on the cross. Without diminishing in any way the gratitude which we owe our heavenly Father, we acknowledge ourselves wholly indebted to Jesus Christ, our Savior. It is also quite apparent that Mary's consent was sought and obtained that the Son of God would become man and save us from our sins. So, without in any way diminishing the gratitude which we owe to Jesus Christ and to our Heavenly Father, we acknowledge ourselves indebted to her.

Our gratitude to God, our Father, is not diminished but rather intensified by our gratitude to his divine Son. In like manner, our gratitude to our divine Lord is not diminished but increased by our gratitude to Mary. Those who honor her the most and show the greatest gratitude to Mary, also offer the highest honor, the deepest gratitude, and the most fervent love to Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer.

MARY — OUR MOTHER

Has Mary, therefore, any relation to us? Yes, she surely has — is the answer of the Catholic Church. And it is the same today as it was in the fourth century: "Eve was called the mother of the living... after the fall this title was given to her. True it is...the whole race of man upon earth was born from Eve; but in reality it is from Mary that Life was truly born to the world. So that by giving birth to the Living One, Mary became the mother of all living" (Saint Epiphanius, *Against Eighty Heresies*, 78, 9).

Christians have expressed Mary's relationship to us by addressing her with the title "Our Mother." This, of course, does

not denote motherhood in the natural sense of the term, but a real spiritual relationship. Just as truly as Saint Paul, speaking to the Corinthians, could say: “In Christ Jesus, through the Gospel, I have begotten you” (1 Corinthians 4:15), Mary can say to all: “In Christ Jesus, through my consent to your redemption, I have begotten you.” She was associated in our regeneration by giving us its Author.

When Jesus Christ on Calvary addressed to Mary the words: “Woman, behold thy son,” and to Saint John, “Behold thy mother,” he proclaimed this truth. Christians always have considered Saint John as personifying all the redeemed who would look upon Mary as their “mother.” This is the origin of devotion to Mary.

Conceived Without Sin

Was Mary, the Mother of Jesus, herself saved from sin? The Catholic Church answers: “She was!” This may come as a surprise to those who have thought that Catholics believe Mary was not redeemed. Do not Catholics believe that Mary was conceived without sin, that she was sinless? Does not this contradict Mary’s own words: “my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior” (Luke 1:47)?

According to Catholic belief, Mary, like every other child born of Adam’s seed, needed to be redeemed and was redeemed. She, like all of us, could obtain grace, sanctity, and salvation only through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is as true of her as it is of us that there is no salvation but in Jesus Christ and there is no other name besides his in which we can be saved.

As the new Eve associated with her divine Son in the work of the redemption, she needed what the redemption brought to all humankind — the merits of Jesus Christ. That she was associated in and, at the same time, benefitted from the redemption involves no contradiction.

We can see something similar in the fall of our first parents and it is but another feature of the resemblance between the Fall and the Reparation.

The effect of Adam’s sin was to despoil not only himself and his posterity of the state of innocence, but also Eve herself at whose instigation his sin was committed. She, of course, committed an offense against God, but her sin could affect only herself personally. Adam alone could affect all others of whom he was the head. So Eve incited Adam to sin and his sin caused her to lose the state of innocence together with her posterity still unborn.

The effect of the redemption of Jesus Christ was not only the salvation of mankind but also the salvation of Mary. She made the

redemption possible for us by her consent and she enjoyed its benefits like other human beings and even more fully than any other human being

Let us put this important point in another way. Adam could truly say to Eve: “It was your counsel that caused me to sin”; and she could say with equal truth to him, “It was your sin that caused me to lose that state of innocence in which I was created.” And Jesus could say to Mary: “By your consent, you made it possible for me to redeem the world”; and she could say to him, “I needed the sacrifice of your passion and death for my redemption.”

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

In relation to the redemption of mankind, Mary’s position was obviously unique and it should not be surprising that her personal redemption by her divine Son was unique. She was not delivered or liberated from sin into which she had fallen, nor was she cleansed from sin with which she had been infected; rather, she was preserved and kept from falling into sin, the infection of original sin was prevented in her case and at the very first instant of her existence in her mother’s womb. She was conceived immaculate by her mother — free from sin and endowed with the grace of Christ by reason of the anticipated merits of his passion and death.

The preservation of Mary from inheriting the state of original sin is commonly called her Immaculate Conception. This does not mean, as so many erroneously think, her virginal conception of Christ, and it is not bound up with the fact that Christ had no human father but was miraculously conceived by Mary. Nor does it mean that Mary was conceived by her mother in a miraculous manner, without marriage relations with her husband. No, as far as Mary’s parents were concerned, she was conceived in the natural manner of human reproduction. Being conceived in the natural manner, Mary would have been conceived without the grace of God and would have inherited the state of lost innocence, as do all those

who descend from Adam by natural human generation. But God saved her from it because of the part she was to play in his divine plan.

The faith of the Catholic Church in the Immaculate Conception is thus simply expressed: The Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first moment of her conception, by a singular privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, our Savior, was preserved from all stain of original sin.

The absence of any stain of original sin in Mary is the important element in her Immaculate Conception. Every child of Adam is normally deprived of the original innocence of our first parents with which he would have been endowed at birth had Adam remained loyal to God. This privation of grace and innocence is figuratively called a "stain," to denote the absence of the luster of God's grace which the human soul lacks when it is first united to the body in the mother's womb. The absence of God's grace means the absence of holiness and a state that is displeasing to God. This state of loss is normally repaired by the spiritual regeneration effected by Christ through the sacrament of Baptism. Mary, however, never bore this stain, but from the first moment in which her body and soul were united, she was in a state of innocence and divine friendship.

THE PROMISED VICTORY

It was when God first promised the future redemption in the presence of Satan and the sinful Adam and Eve, that we find an indication of Mary's privilege. "I will put enmities between thee [the serpent used figuratively for Satan] and the woman, between thy seed [all sinful followers of Satan] and her seed [Jesus Christ who will crush the serpent's head]" (Genesis 3:15). Christians have always seen in that announcement a promise of the future Redeemer and his victory over sin and the devil. For Jesus is the seed of the woman in conflict with the seed of the serpent.

Jesus, however, is the seed of the woman who is opposed to Satan not because of any remote connection he might have with Eve, in whom we do not find the promised opposition. Eve, like Adam, had fallen victim to the serpent. It is only in Mary associated with her Son in opposition to the serpent that such enmity can be found.

Likewise, the woman and her seed will enjoy a complete victory over the serpent whose head will be crushed. Complete victory over the devil can only mean complete victory over sin and its consequences. The complete and unqualified victory of the Son and his mother, who is associated with him in the promised victory, would not have been realized if Mary had been subjected to sin and the devil at any time.

Sin in Mary would have opposed her to God, not to Satan. But God promised complete opposition between the woman and Satan, and through her seed, complete victory over him. And God fulfilled this promise by preserving her from original sin.

The significance of this divine promise was not missed by the early Christians, as is evident in their writings which have been preserved to this day. Those who think that Catholics of recent centuries have added new doctrines to the original Christian teaching with regard to Mary's sanctity in particular and all the privileges which we attribute to her in general, should read what the Christians in the first centuries actually taught.

EARLY CHRISTIAN REVERENCE

Pertinent passages from their works have been translated into English and collected into volumes such as the one entitled *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries* by Thomas Livius, published by Burns & Oates. In the preface to this book, the learned author states: "Endeavoring to be as impartial as possible, I have formed the clear conviction that...writers of the first six centuries unanimously held our Blessed Lady in the same high

appreciation as she has been held in by Catholics of all subsequent ages; and that everything that the Church has at any time defined or sanctioned with regard to her privileges and the honor that is her due...is to be found substantially and in principle or germ in the writings (which I assembled).... Nay, more, it will appear from the passages which I quote...that many of the Fathers were so explicit and profuse in their eulogies of the holy mother of God, that they left little for those who came after them to do, but to repeat their own words, and re-echo their praise."

How did the early Christians speak of Mary's holiness? "Others may be holy," they said, "but Mary enjoyed the whole fullness of holiness." "God, who made the first virgin [Eve] without sin, made the second virgin [Mary] without fault." When speaking of her sanctity, they used such adjectives as holiness "intact," "unpolluted," "uncontaminated," "incorrupt," "guiltless." She is not only immaculate, but "totally immaculate" — "totally without sin," "entirely immune from sin," "untouched by sin." Does the belief of Catholics today that Mary was preserved from all stain of sin, even original sin, add anything to such belief that runs through the whole history of Christian people?

If you wonder why this freedom of sin at the outset of her life is so important and why Christians always have acclaimed her to have been immaculate and unstained, the reason is that she was therefore fit to become the mother of the Redeemer, worthy to be associated with the Son of God in a most intimate relationship. In Mary there was no shame of sin to reflect on her child. The flesh which the Holy One took from her as his mother was the flesh of one who had never been — in any sense — a sinner.

The absence of sin in Mary meant holiness — a holiness in which she steadily grew. When the time came for the angel of God to visit her, he could salute her as "full of grace" and "blessed among women." Never before did a messenger from God address a human being in such language. There must have been a reason.

REASONS FOR MARY'S HOLINESS

There are two important points that must be kept in mind in finding that reason. The first is that God does nothing by chance or on the spur of the moment. The Eternal God simply does not act that way. What he does in the world, he has planned from the beginning of time. He did not just happen to send an angel to a small Judean town to a nice Jewish girl whom he selected to be the mother of the Messias after a quick omniscient glance over all the others and a quick decision that she was to be the one. She was in his mind from the beginning. When she came into existence, it was to be the mother of God.

The second point is that when God gives anyone a work to do, he gives the wherewithal to do it right. Saint Paul, for example, said, "God has made us fit ministers of the new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:6). In other words, by his grace, he has made us fit to fulfill that to which he has called us. God, then, who chose Mary to be the mother of God, gave her grace, blessedness, and holiness that made her worthy of that dignity. She was fit to be the mother of God and to receive God himself into her bosom.

Mary's Assumption

In the first pages of the Book of Genesis, we find Adam being warned by his Maker not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: "For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death" (Genesis 2:17). He would only know death as a penalty of transgressing the divine command. Obedience would mean bodily immortality.

The same appears throughout many other passages: "God made not death," says the Book of Wisdom (1:13), "neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living.... God created man incorrupt...but by the envy of the devil, death came into the world" (2:23-24). Saint Paul says the same: "as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death; and thus death has passed unto all men, because all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

And so we find the penalty inflicted upon our first parents "dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return" (Genesis 3:19). Death and the dissolution of man's body in the grave is a penalty of sin which mankind inherits together with the sin itself.

How does all this apply to Mary? If she was preserved by her Immaculate Conception from inheriting original sin and its consequences, should we not expect that "dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return" did not apply to her?

That Mary's body did not decompose in the grave but was reunited by God to her soul soon after her death, and that she was thus taken to her eternal reward in heaven, is the teaching of the Catholic Church which is commonly called Mary's Assumption.

But why, you may ask, did Mary die at all? When her sojourn on earth reached its appointed time, why was she not transported to her reward without being subjected to death? To understand the answer to that question, it is well to go back and consider

another penalty with which the human race was afflicted because of the sin of our first parents — suffering. Pain and trouble known in life are a result of the fall (Genesis 3:16-18). Mankind was not originally intended to experience physical trouble and suffering; it was introduced into the world by sin.

Suffering and death are the consequences of the sin from which Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem us. It was by enduring suffering and death that he did so. As born of Mary, he was a member of the human family, but he was not of Adam's seed, as he had no human father. Thus he could not have inherited any sin or contracted the penalties of suffering and death. These penalties were freely assumed by him for the purpose of offering God the supreme act of love by his suffering and death on the cross — and thus redeeming us.

MARY SUBMITS TO SUFFERING AND DEATH

Mary would have inherited sin and the penalties of sin, if God had not preserved her from them. As a result, hers was a condition similar to our first parents before the fall. The privileges of freedom from suffering and freedom from death could have been hers, but she was to be associated with the suffering Redeemer in the redemption which demanded his death. She freely associated herself with him and therefore freely submitted to suffering and death, not as punishments of sin, but as natural defects of human nature. She freely relinquished privileges befitting one who was free from original sin and submitted to suffering and death, as befitted an associate of the Redeemer.

So there was a reason why Mary died and there was a reason why her dead body did not remain in the grave. Mary, as the second Eve, was associated with Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, in the complete triumph which he gained over sin and its consequences — especially death. By her Immaculate

Conception, she shared in his victory over sin; by her bodily assumption into heaven, she shared in his victory over death.

We must not forget the passage in Genesis which provides the basis for the belief of Catholics concerning Mary's place in the divine plan of our redemption and the privileges that were hers: "I will place enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed" (3:15). Elsewhere in this booklet, it has been pointed out that the opposition referred to here is between the Redeemer with his mother on the one side, and Satan with his followers on the other. It is clear that the victory over Satan by the Redeemer and his mother will be complete.

Now, in what did the victory of Christ consist? "To this end the Son of God appeared," Saint John tells us, "that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). What he came to do, he did. That is his victory.

But what are "the works of the devil" which Christ came to destroy? Sin, first of all, but also its consequences, among which is death.

TRIUMPH OF THE NEW ADAM

How does the New Testament speak of Christ's victory? When he first met Christ, John the Baptist said: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). And death, too, will be destroyed: "He [God, the Father] has put all his enemies under his [Jesus Christ] feet...and the last enemy to be destroyed will be death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). "Death is swallowed up in victory. O, death, where is thy victory? O, death, where is thy sting? Now the sting of death is sin...but thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (54-57).

All people are called to participate in the triumph of the new Adam and all will participate, but in different ways. That is why Saint Paul wrote to the Romans: "The God of peace will speedily crush

Satan under your feet" (16:20). But what is Mary's part in Christ's victory over sin and death? That she has an important part in the victory of Christ, we cannot doubt, because she appears in the promise of the future Redeemer singularly associated with him as the enemy of the devil, as the mother of him who triumphs over the devil.

Then neither sin nor death will triumph over her, as they failed to triumph over Christ, her Son. This is true of sin, even original sin, which we do not ourselves actually commit but which we inherit at birth. She was preserved by the triumph of her Immaculate Conception. By the same token, her victory over death was accomplished by her bodily assumption into heaven. She died, it is true, and her Son also died. But it was not the death which Saint Paul calls the "wages of sin" and the work of the devil — a death which is prolonged by decomposition in the grave until the final resurrection of all. This is the death which is the punishment of sin — a punishment which was not inflicted on her.

Yes, there is a reason why Mary's body did not remain in the grave, and we find the reason indicated in the written word of God when all its teachings are attentively considered. It is a truth revealed by God that Christ's victory over Satan included victory over sin and death. This is explicitly taught in the New Testament. We have likewise pointed out from the promise of the Redeemer in Genesis and from the announcement of his coming and Mary's consent in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, that Mary was singularly associated with him in his victory over Satan. What was his victory over death, if not part of his victory over Satan and sin? Coupled with his, her victory over death, in her Assumption, is surely, therefore, revealed by God.

MARY'S ASSUMPTION

All this has been put very briefly by Pope Pius XII, when he solemnly proclaimed Mary's Assumption: "We must remember

especially that, since the second century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the Holy Fathers as the new Eve, who, although subject to the new Adam, is most intimately associated with him in that struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the *protoevangelium* (Genesis 3:15), finally resulted in that most complete victory over the sin and death which are always mentioned together in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles (cf. Romans., Chapters 5 and 6). Consequently, just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and final sign of this victory, so that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body."

Thus, with good reason, Catholics consider Mary's assumption into heaven a fact which cannot be denied without impugning the authority of God himself.

Note well that we speak of Mary's assumption as a fact — a fact revealed by God and, therefore, a doctrinal fact, the certainty of which rests on God's authority. It is not a mere historical fact which stands or falls according to the weight of historical evidence for or against it.

Let no one forget that it was God and no human agency who caused Mary to be assumed into heaven. It is even possible that her assumption was accomplished in a manner which no human being could witness. So the fact does not stand solely on the credibility of human witnesses or their recorded documentary evidence. It stands or falls on the authority of Christ's Church which was commissioned by him to teach all people revealed truth with the assurance of his abiding guidance. It is Christ's Church which assured us that Mary's assumption is a fact revealed by God.

No one knows certainly where and when the Assumption took place. The circumstances are relatively unimportant. That the fact itself was accepted as revealed by Almighty God is evidence that

it originated with the Apostles, for only from them a publicly revealed truth could come.

This does not mean, however, that all or any of the Apostles were necessarily eyewitnesses of the event. If none of them witnessed it, they could not have been certain unless in some way God made them certain. Even if Mary's tomb was found empty shortly after her death, there was always the possibility that her body had been removed to an unknown place. So if none of the Apostles was an eyewitness, only divine intervention could have given them the certainty with which the Assumption was preached and accepted.

When Pius XII, on November 1, 1950, solemnly proclaimed to the world that "the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory," he was not teaching anything new or a truth that had not been heard before, but he was giving a well-known fact a new emphasis and the whole Church the clear-cut assurance that what had been believed about Mary's Assumption was truly revealed by God.

Why did the Pope in the year 1950 make this rare use of his office to call Mary's Assumption to the attention of the world? He, himself, gave the answer when he said in substance: "The solemn proclamation of the Assumption will contribute in no small way to the advantage of human society since it redounds to the glory of God. It is to be hoped that a more fervent regard for Mary will be stirred up and that all those who glory in the Christian name will be moved by the desire of sharing in the unity of Christ's Mystical Body and of increasing their love for her who in all things shows her motherly heart to the members of that body. And so we may hope that those who meditate upon the glorious example Mary offers us may be more and more convinced of the value of a human life entirely devoted to carrying out the heavenly Father's will and to bringing good to others. Finally, it is our hope that belief in Mary's

bodily assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and more effective."

Mary

The predestination of the Blessed Virgin as Mother of God was associated with the incarnation of the divine word: in the designs of divine Providence she was the gracious mother of the divine Redeemer here on earth, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth, and nourished Christ, she presented him to the Father in the temple, shared her Son's sufferings as he died on the cross. Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

Dogmatic Constitution On the Church (n. 61)
Second Vatican Council

"Faith seeks understanding": it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith, and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love. The grace of faith opens "the eyes of your hearts" to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation.

– Catechism of the Catholic Church, 158.

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Pope St. John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae,* 5
Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in our Time

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