

## *Devotion to Mary* *June 25, 2014*

In 1964, Venerable, Pope Paul VI, responding to the Theological Commission, which had removed the title Mother of the Church from the chapter on the Blessed Virgin, and to those bishops who wanted the title, made the following statement, “We are happy to announce to you...that we shall close this session of the Ecumenical Council...by joyfully bestowing on Our Lady the title due to her, Mother of the Church.”<sup>1</sup> Ten years later, he promulgated his Apostolic Exhortation For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion To The Blessed Virgin Mary – Marialis Cultus, in which he described devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary as something which “...forms a very noble part of the whole sphere of that sacred worship in which there intermingle the highest expressions of wisdom and of religion...the primary task of the People of God.”<sup>2</sup> He went on to explain that during the Second Vatican Council, the Constitution on the Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium called on the Church to “...restore and enhance the liturgy and to make more fruitful the participation of the faithful in the sacred mysteries.”<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, we are reminded that we are to adore God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and venerate “...with special love Mary the

most holy Mother of God.”<sup>4</sup> Tonight’s topic will consider how we are and can better fulfill this mandate. While *Marialis Cultus* contains references to both the Roman Rite and the Eastern Rite, due to the time constraints of this talk, we will limit ourselves to Paul VI’s instruction and application for those of us in the Roman Rite.

One of the indicators of our growth in genuine Christian piety is the devotion we have to our Blessed Mother. As we grow in our love of Mary, so we grow in our love of the Blessed Trinity and it should therefore lead to an increase in our love and imitation of Jesus. Since anything we say about Mary can also be said, in some way, about the Church, love and devotion to Our Mother is reflected in how we live our Catholic faith and participate in the Liturgy of the Church. To assist us, our Holy Father set before the Church guidelines of authentic devotion to Our Lady which include those that “...the Church has approved within the limits of wholesome and orthodox doctrine’ (Lumen Gentium 66) have developed in [harmony] and subordination to the worship of Christ and have gravitated towards this worship as to their natural and necessary point of reference.”<sup>5</sup>

We begin by observing Mary’s role in the Sacred Liturgy as practiced in the revised Roman Rite. Veneration of Mary is closely tied to the Scripture readings used throughout the

---

<sup>1</sup> Wiltgen, Fr. Ralph M., SVD., *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: A History of Vatican II*, Rockford, Illinois; Tan Books and Publishers, 1967, p. 240-241.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Paul VI, *For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to The Blessed Virgin Mary*, *Marialis Cultus*, Feb. 2, 1972, introduction

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

---

<sup>4</sup> II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125

<sup>5</sup> *Marialis Cultus*, introduction

liturgical year, in the Liturgy of the Mass, and the Liturgy of the Hours. By building the liturgies on annual calendar cycles, we travel through Old Testament prophecies, to the Incarnation, Christ's Passion, Death, Ascension, and His reign in glory. In this way the liturgy encompasses the mysteries of Jesus and in the process, the prophecies concerning Mary and also her role in Christ's mysteries and work of redemption as seen in the Gospels.

Beginning with Advent, Catholics meditate on the promise of the Woman and her Seed who will come to defeat the evil one. All through Advent we get hints about both of them. We are told that the Savior will be born of a Virgin, from the line of Judah, in the city of Bethlehem...and the list goes on. Set in juxtaposition to these, we have Gospel readings that show the fulfillment of each prophecy. Christmas season introduces us to the hidden years, where Jesus is formed under the guidance of Mary and Joseph. During Ordinary time the focus is Jesus' three years of public ministry, but even as we look at that time, we receive hints of Mary's role, such as, the Wedding at Cana "Do whatever He tells you."<sup>6</sup>, to Jesus being identified as the son of Mary and the son of the carpenter. Lent, places us in the heart of Mary while she ponders what the Hebrew Scriptures foretell about the coming of the Messiah and His many sufferings for the people of God. Holy Week calls us to walk the way of sorrows with Mary, in perfect obedience to the Father, supporting Jesus as He is betrayed, suffers, gives the Church to Mary, dies and is buried. We rejoice with Mary when Jesus rises from the dead and goes forth to prepare the Church for her role after Pentecost. Once Mary witnesses the Ascension of Jesus

into Heaven, she as Mother of the Church gathers the Church around her in prayer and remains under the care of St. John during the early years after Jesus returns to the Father. With Mary, Easter is a time of hope in the future resurrection of each of us. Mary takes us to Jesus throughout our Church year.

Along the way, the Church inserts Masses to further develop our devotion to the Blessed Virgin. For example, Saturday is traditionally a day devoted to Mary. The Church has a lectionary just for Mary Masses, and the Roman Missal contains prayers for Masses devoted to the Blessed Mother under such titles as Our Lady Help of Christians, and Our Lady Seat of Wisdom. Venerable Paul VI had asked the Church to give special notice to the Liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25, the Solemnity of the Assumption on August 15 and the Queenship of Mary on August 22, which taken together show the fullness of Mary's call. He likewise reminds us to pay specific attention to Marian devotions that have particular importance to our general area. These include the Feast like Our Lady of Guadalupe – December 12<sup>th</sup>, Our Lady of Lourdes – February 11<sup>th</sup>, Our Lady of Fatima – May 13<sup>th</sup>, and the Nativity of Mary – September 8<sup>th</sup>. In addition, our Holy Father asked us spend time reflecting on feasts of our Lord and our Lady that are closely tied, giving the examples: the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – September 14<sup>th</sup> and the Memorial of our Lady of Sorrows – September 15<sup>th</sup>.

Looking at the Eucharistic Prayers, antiphons, hymns and hymn-prayers we discover that the Liturgy is filled with doctrine and faithful devotion to our Lady.

---

<sup>6</sup> John 2:1-12

Corresponding to this, the pope wrote, “This daily commemoration, by reason of its place at the heart of the divine Sacrifice, should be considered a particularly expressive form of veneration that the Church pays to ...”<sup>7</sup> the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the Roman Missal it is easy to reflect on the beauty and truth of Marian doctrine and spirituality, found in “...the themes of Mary’s Immaculate Conception and the fullness of grace, the divine motherhood, the unblemished and fruitful virginity, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Mary’s cooperation in the work of her Son, her exemplary sanctity, merciful intercession, Assumption into Heaven [from where she continues to draw us ever closer to Jesus], maternal Queenship and many other themes.”<sup>8</sup>

As was mentioned in Sr. Mary Ann’s talk, in the Second Vatican Council and more specifically *Lumen Gentium* we have a greater development of Mary, Mother of the Church; and Mary as the primary example of what a member of the Church should become. Whether looking at the primitive Church gathered around Mary in prayer, which we see in Acts 1, or our present day Church, Mary always leads us to Jesus. “And since the liturgy is worship that requires a way of living consistent with it, it asks that devotion to the Blessed Virgin should become a concrete and deeply-felt love for the Church, as is wonderfully expressed in the prayer after Communion in the Mass of September: [which states]’...that as we recall the sufferings shared by the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may with the Church fulfill in ourselves what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

Beside the increase of Marian prayers, antiphons, intentions, etc. in the Roman Missal, the revised Lectionary in the Roman Rite, has increased and enriched the Scriptural texts used in the three –year cycle of readings, so as to provide us with a more comprehensive and orderly understanding of the mysteries of Christ and by that a fuller understanding of Mary’s role as found in both the Old and New Testament. The revised Liturgy of the Hours has increased and beautified the use of Marian hymns, hymn-prayers, antiphons and intercessions, “...prayers which frequently express trusting recourse to the Mother of Mercy.”<sup>10</sup>

The “Missal, Lectionary, and Liturgy of the Hours contain the hinges of the liturgical prayer of the Roman Rite”, however it is not limited to them. The Church invokes her for all of the Sacrament and for all of the vocations. Mary, after Jesus, is the primary model for living and celebrating the liturgical life for every vocation. “...she is recognized as the most excellent exemplar...in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ,”<sup>11</sup> recognizing how she witnessed to the Incarnate Word present in her womb, through life to His rising from the tomb.

Pope Paul VI goes on to identify her as the “Virgin in Prayer,” who, at the Visitation to St. Elizabeth and the unborn St. John the Baptist, “...pours out her soul in expressions glorifying God and expressions of humility, faith and hope.”<sup>12</sup> The perfect example of Mary’s prayer is found in her **Magnificat**<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, paragraph 10

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, paragraph 11

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, paragraph 13

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, paragraph 17

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> Luke 1: 46-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior 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 forever.

At Cana (Jn. 2:1-12) we witness her intercessory prayer and throughout her life we see reflections of her meditative, her contemplative prayer in the oft repeated words, “She pondered in her heart...” Toward the end of her life, we have the early Church, in the form of the Apostles, disciples, and faithful women, gathered around her in prayer. (Acts. 1:14)

Being both virgin and mother, Mary exemplifies the fruitfulness of the Church. According to the ancient Fathers of the Church “...the Church prolongs in the Sacrament of Baptism the virginal motherhood of Mary.”<sup>14</sup> St. Leo the Great wrote, “The origin which Christ took in the womb of the Virgin He has given to the baptismal font: He has given to the water what He had given to the His Mother – the power of the Most High and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk. 1:35), which was responsible for Mary’s bringing forth the Savior,

---

<sup>14</sup> Marialis Cultus, paragraph 19

has the same effect, so that water may regenerate the believer.”<sup>15</sup>

Mary also witnesses as the “Virgin presenting offerings”<sup>16</sup> reflected especially in the presentation in the Temple at the beginning of Christ’s life on earth, and her standing at the foot of the Cross presenting Jesus to the Father. At Cana, Mary prodded Jesus on His way and at Calvary she returned Him to His Father.

Mary leads us to Christ, she teaches us to grow in the spiritual life by continually saying, “I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your will...”<sup>17</sup> and “Do whatever He tells you...”<sup>18</sup> Showing us how to live the words of the Our Father, “Your will be done...”<sup>19</sup> Recognizing Mary as the Mother of the Church, seeing the action of the Triune God: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the life of this humble maiden and seeing how He has continually called her to greater things, the Church calls on us to hold Mary in profound veneration.

All of these things lead to a renewed call for devotion to the Humble Virgin. Devotion which, like all veneration of Mary is by its very nature, Christocentric and Trinitarian, in that we go to our Mother to help us pray to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. As our venerable pope wrote, “It was with a view to Christ that God the Father from all eternity chose her to be the all-holy Mother and adorned her with gifts of the spirit granted to no one else.”<sup>20</sup> He goes on to point out that “...the sanctifying intervention of the Spirit in the Virgin of Nazareth was a culminating moment of the Spirit’s action in the history of

---

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 20

<sup>17</sup> Luke 1:36

<sup>18</sup> John 2:1-12

<sup>19</sup> Mt. 6:10

<sup>20</sup> Marialis Cultus, paragraph 25

Salvation.”<sup>21</sup> From the Holy Spirit, “...as from a spring these flowed forth the fullness of grace (Lk. 1:28) and the abundance of gifts that adorned her. Thus [the saints] attribute to the Spirit the faith, hope, and charity that animated the Virgin’s heart, the strength that sustained her acceptance of the will of God, and the vigor that upheld her in her suffering at the foot of the Cross.”<sup>22</sup>

On Sunday, Sr. Marie Bernadette reminded us of the close tie between Mary and the Church. Soon to be Blessed, Pope Paul VI puts it this way, “Thus love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other,”<sup>23</sup> The question we Christians need to ask, is how do we know which devotions to our Blessed Mother are good? Pope Paul VI gives us four basic guidelines. They must be biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological, meaning:

1. The Bible is one of our basic prayer books. “...from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, also contains clear references to her who was the Mother of God...What is needed is that texts of prayers and chants should draw their inspiration and wording from the Bible, and above all that devotions to the Virgin should be imbued with the great themes of the Christian message. This will ensure that, as they venerate the Seat of Wisdom, the faithful in their turn will be enlightened by the divine word, and be inspired to live their lives in accordance with the precepts of Incarnate Wisdom.”<sup>24</sup>

2. We began this talk with ways the Church venerates the Blessed Virgin Mary in the celebration of the Liturgy. To that can be added that devotions should harmonize with the liturgical season which is why we switch from the Angelus (Angel of the Lord) to Regina Caeli (Queen of Heaven) at Easter, and why some Marian hymns are more appropriately sung in one season and not another. Parish novenas and/or other devotions like the rosary should come before or after Mass and not during.
3. True devotion to our Lady is in keeping with the ecclesial character of the Church and is part of our deep desires and aims in ecumenism.<sup>25</sup> The more we know and can express the Scriptural understanding of Marina devotion, “Praising God with the very words of the Virgin...”<sup>26</sup> the greater our unity in prayer with those of other faith traditions. Love of Mary the Mother of God – Theotokos is a uniting factor between the Church and the Orthodox. Helping Christians to recognize their role as intercessors will aid them in seeing the role of Mary as an intercessor, noting that God honors His Mother and so should we.
4. The pope explained that since Mary is not at odds with true human science, our nature being created by God, we need to get beyond the recognizable cultural differences between societies in Mary’s lifetime and ours, learning to appreciate woman’s role in “scientific

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, paragraph 26

<sup>22</sup> Ibid,

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, paragraph 28

<sup>24</sup> Marialis Cultus, paragraph 30

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, paragraph 32

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

research and intellectual activities.”<sup>27</sup> This should not lead to a separation or disenchantment with devotion to Our Lady. She is still our model because, “...she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (Lk. 1:38), 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.”<sup>28</sup> and “In contemplating Mary and her mission these different generations of Christians, looking on her as the New Woman and perfect Christian, found in her as a virgin, wife and mother the outstanding type of womanhood and the preeminent exemplar of life lived in accordance with the Gospels and summing up the most characteristic situations in the life of a woman.”<sup>29</sup> Note how she was free to call upon Jesus to care for the needs of the couple being married in Cana, and how she gathered around her women, some like Mary Magdalene who were definitely not acceptable in society, her strength to stand in defiance of Roman power at the foot of the Cross (Jn. 19:25), and the list goes on. Mary is an example of strength and goodness that should be emulated today. No matter what our state in life, we need to recognize, “...that the ultimate purpose of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to

glorify God and to lead Christians to commit themselves to a life which is in absolute conformity with His will.”<sup>30</sup>

At the end of his apostolic exhortation Ven. Paul VI promotes two long held acts of piety: the Angelus and the Rosary. While they cannot compare with the liturgy, of all the devotions to Our Lady, these are two of the most common and easiest to implement in the family, the classroom, the workplace and between friends. Although the Rosary has since then been developed by St. John Paul II, neither of these two devotions are in need of revision. The Angelus is traditionally prayed at 6 AM, 12 noon, and 6 PM. This is a most appropriate, daily reminder of the Annunciation and Incarnation.

#### Angelus “Angel of the Lord”

V. The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary...

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word. Hail Mary...

V. (genuflect) And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt among us. Hail Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Let us pray.

All: 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.

During Easter, the Angelus is replaced with Regina Caeli which reinforces the doctrine of

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, paragraph 34

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, paragraph 35

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, paragraph 36

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, paragraph 39

Christ's resurrection and the role Mary played in our salvation.

Regina Caeli **"Queen of Heaven"**

V. Queen of heaven, rejoice! Alleluia.

R. For He whom you did merit to bear.

Alleluia.

V. Has risen, as he said. Alleluia.

R. Pray for us to God. Alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary. Alleluia.

R. For the Lord is truly risen. Alleluia.

V. Let us pray:

All: O God, who gave joy to the world through the resurrection of Your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech you, that through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rosary, even before the luminous mysteries, was called "the compendium of the entire Gospel."<sup>31</sup> While meditating on the mysteries of Christ and His Blessed Mother, we pray a litany of Hail Mary's which "...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."<sup>32</sup> Praying the Rosary leads us to praise, petition, contemplation, a lifting up of voice and heart to God. "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."<sup>33</sup> Drawing its motivating force from the liturgy it also leads back to the liturgy without becoming one with it. The most appropriate place for the recitation of the rosary is within the domestic

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, paragraph 42

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, paragraph 46

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, paragraph 47

church, our families. After the liturgy, there is no more unifying prayer than the family rosary. May we encourage one another to make it a basis of our family prayer.

Soon to be Blessed Paul VI concluded this document with the reminder that "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship. The honor which the Church has always and everywhere shown to the Mother of the Lord...based on the singular dignity of Mary. 'Mother of the Son of God and therefore beloved daughter of the Father and Temple of the Holy Spirit – Mary, who, because of this extraordinary grace, is far greater than any creature on earth or in heaven.'"<sup>34</sup> Let us continually turn toward the Mother of God and our Mother for assistance in avoiding sin, developing a life of virtue (imitating her generous obedience, genuine humility, solicitous charity, profound wisdom, enthusiastic worship of God, prayer in the midst of work, fortitude in exile and suffering, poverty which reflects trust in God, strong chaste married love, and virginal purity).<sup>35</sup>

Pope Paul VI. (February 2, 1974). *Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Paul VI Marialis Cultus: For the Right Ordering and Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Vatican, II Vatican Council, (1964). *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Vatican

Wiltgen, Fr. Ralph M., SVD., (1967). *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: A History of Vatican II*, Rockford, Illinois; Tan Books and Publishers.

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, paragraph 56

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, paragraph 57

