

**CENTERED ON CHRIST,  
WALKING WITH MARY**

Supplement N. 30 - 31 \* May 1988  
Marian Year

PUBLICATION OF THE WORLD CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY  
C.P.6139 - (Borgo S. Spirito 8) - 00195 Roma - ITALIA  
Editions: English, Spanish, French  
Editor: JOSE REYES

**PUBLICACION DE LA COMUNIDAD MUNDIAL DE VIDA CRISTIANA**

Toda correspondencia debe ser dirigida a:

C. P. 6139 - 00195 ROMA (Italia)

**EDITA Y DISTRIBUYE:**

Federación de Comunidades de Vida Cristiana de España

Maldonado, 1 - A - 28006 MADRID (España)

Depósito legal: M. 38.911-1986

**IMPRIME:**

Impresos y Revistas, S. A. (IMPRESA)

Torneros, 58. Polig. Ind. Los Angeles

GETAFE (Madrid)

## SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION .....	3
FIRST PART: The Mother of the Redeemer .....	6
Summary of the Encyclical "Redemptoris Mater" (Guido Jonquieres s.j.) .....	7
Growing in our faith, with Mary, Mother of the Redeemer (Tim Quinlan s.j.) .....	15
Mary and the unity of all Christians (Francesco Botta s.j.) .....	24
SECOND PART: United with all peoples, let us sing to the God who saves us .....	29
You have found favour with God (Marciano Baptista s.j. - Hong Kong) .....	30
"Happy you who believed!" (Prayer) .....	41
Mary, the new Eve (Tasinda Pagu Malumba - Zaire) .....	45
Our beloved Patroness (Felix Palencia s.j. - Mexico) .....	48
Our Guide (Felix Palencia s.j. - Mexico) .....	54

How the CLC in Brazil see the Virgin Mary today .....	58
Mary, Queen of the Apostles (Dominic Totaro s.j. - USA) .....	64
Mary, the Model of our mission (Serge Legault - Canada) .....	68
Devotion to Mary (Madeleine Laberge - Canada) .....	71
Scraps of mystery (a CLC member - Poland) .....	75
In the Sanctuary of Arantzazu (Javier Leach s.j.) .....	79
Mary and women (Josefina Errázuriz - Chile) .....	83

APPENDIX:

Our Lady in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius (Peter-Hans Kolvenbach s.j.) .....	91
---	----

## INTRODUCTION

A number of persons were disconcerted when the Pope announced that there would be a celebration throughout the whole Church of a "Marian year". What is it all about?... Where is the Pope asking us to go? Why now, on the threshold of the third millennium, is a celebration of this kind being proposed to us? These, and many other, questions expressed the first reaction of many upon hearing of the proclamation of the "Marian year".

We, the CLC, have also been wondering the same things. And little by little, by means of circumstances, reflection, and prayer, we have been discovering the immense gift that God has been wanting to give to his people through the medium of this Marian celebration. What came immediately to mind was the theme of our last World Assembly: "Mary, model of our mission: "Do whatever he tells you". Once again we recalled our General Principles, especially the one that explicitly refers to our Lady. In particular, we saw the Marian year as a new impulse given to our already-centuries-old desire to live our Christian life following the model Mary laid down for us, and to see it as a chance to "hear with the Church" Mary's heartbeat.

In fact, starting from its origins, our association has always strongly encouraged a "special devotion to Our Lady of the Annunciation" (the first rules of the Marian Congregations with which we became acquainted). And thus, we began to see the Marian year as a privileged opportunity to contemplate the "Holy Trinity, the whole of creation and of humanity, with Our Lady at its center". At the same time, we had been feeling that the whole Church, twenty years after the Vatican II Council had entered a phase of its pilgrimage in which Mary may be considered within the framework of the "mysterious relationship existing between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth, just as it is within the Spirit of God's action upon the Church" (Marialis Cultus 27), so that this is a phase during which Mary is to be celebrated by means of exercises of piety that "clearly express the

Christological and Trinitarian character that is intrinsic to them and indeed essential to them" (MC 25)

Thus, while at the start people were disconcerted, they then became full of enthusiasm and hope, the result of their opening up to the grace that, in this Marian year, God wishes to give us, in our desire to give witness in today's world of our renewed "devotion to our Lady of the Annunciation-Incarnation". Quite beyond what the various national and local communities have done and are continuing to do during this Marian year, the World Executive Council wishes to fall in line with the spirit that today is reigning within the Church, and has borne witness to this by means of two events that are universal in nature: the celebration of the World CLC Day with Mary as its theme, and the publication of this Supplement to PROGRESSIO.

Guidelines, based on the encyclical "Redemptoris Mater", were distributed for the World day, in order to help the CLC in their prayer and in their bearing witness to each other of their faith. We note that traditionally, and this is not by chance, the World day is celebrated on March 25th, the feast-day of the Annunciation.

As for the publication of this Supplement, a simple scheme was decided upon, but one which expressed our adherence and our contribution to this rediscovery of Mary at the center of the pilgrim Church.

In the Supplement's first part you will find three texts that in their various ways summarize the encyclical Redemptoris Mater promulgated by John Paul II, which at the same time propose a few reflections and guidelines to aid our members to go deeper into it and pray over it. The objective of this first part is to help everyone get closer to the encyclical in simple but profound fashion, in such a manner that the reading beforehand or afterwards, of the complete text of Redemptoris Mater may have a greater impact on the lives of everyone.

In its second part you will find a series of articles developing one or another aspect of our current forms of loving Mary and of traveling with her, without making any pretense to being a systematic theological meditation on the theme. There are writings by group members from Canada, the United States of America, Hong Kong, Zaire, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Poland and Spain. Reading this diversity of views and ideas provides us with the possibility of being impressed by this or that shade of meaning or of understanding of the topic, which at times may be very much tied to the culture of the country in which it was written, but where may be found a surprising convergence in the basic orientations.

As an appendix, and so as to gather together the available material in one single volume, we deemed it appropriate to publish a text already known to many of you, which expresses very clearly and authoritatively the shades of our devotion to Mary, as they flow from the Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. It is the text of the conference given by Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach s.j., in 1985, within the frame of reference of the eighth course on Ignatian Spirituality. The text was then published in "Some theological aspects of Ignatian Spirituality", CIS, 1985.

In between, within smaller inset articles, we are giving a few quotations or guidelines for prayer, with the intent of helping make it possible for all the material we are offering here to go from our minds into our hearts.

It makes us very happy to be able to publish this Supplement. We are affectionately dedicating it to the CLC members throughout the world who, with faith and confidence, have made the path of renewal that has led us, among other things, to be able to celebrate with joy and hope this Marian year, in communion with the whole Church. We are dedicating it too to many young members, who, owing to the Spiritual Exercises, are progressively discovering in Mary the perfect model of intimacy with Jesus and of cooperation with his mission. Or, to say it in other words, are discovering Jesus in relationship to Mary.

PROGRESSIO

## FIRST PART

### MOTHER OF THE REDEEMER

In this first part, we present three documents which follow closely the text of "Redemptoris Mater", the Encyclical of His Holiness John Paul II. They aim to help individuals and local communities to read and deepen their understanding of the encyclical.



# SUMMARY OF THE ENCYCLICAL REDEMPTORIS MATER

## Introduction

The whole Church, in its adhesion to Christ, travels the same itinerary as the virgin Mary. Hers is the "figure", the advance model, of the Church, in faith, in hope and in charity, in a perfect union with Christ.

If the year 2000 will provide us the occasion to celebrate in a special way the birth of the Lord with a "Jubilee", the time separating us from this date may be considered a sort of long Advent to be lived together with Mary. Her "pilgrimage" in the faith is a reference point for us all. And so much the more is this true in that she has reached the end of the journey, as the first member of the Church, and after Christ has come into the final glory, crossing the threshold between faith and face-to-face seeing. Thus, she illuminates all of our history.

### I. Mary in the mystery of Christ

The angel's annunciation introduces Mary into the Mystery of Christ, in which God has blessed all of humanity by his eternal design, so that we may become "holy and immaculate in his presence" (Eph.1,36). This blessing touched Mary in a special manner. Clearly, she is "blessed among women" (Lk 1,42) and "full of grace" (Lk 1,28). She is eternally loved by God in his beloved Son. She has been eternally elected to be the mother of this Son. And the redemption worked by her son is anticipated in her, preserving her from inheriting original sin; she is Christ's, right from her own conception. And in the victorious struggle against evil, she is always at her son's side, as we see right from the divine promise of Genesis (3,15), up to the vision of the book of Revelation (chapter 12).

Elizabeth says Mary is "happy because she has believed". Because of this faith of Mary, which responds

to the divine choice, the promise could become reality in her. Her consent and her yielding herself up to the divine plan, in an "obedience of faith", are the human decision that make possible the realization of the mystery of redemption. Just as Abraham's faith was the starting point of the old covenant, Mary's faith is the starting point of the new covenant. Then, like Abraham, Mary too went on believing, and to "hope against all hope", since she had confidence in God, above and beyond her own capacity to understand. Simeon's prophecy and the flight into Egypt were for her the announcement, complementary to the Angel's, that her path, beside her son, would be dark and painful. During Jesus' hidden life, Mary's life too was "hidden with Christ in God" (cf Col 3,3). Day after day she lived intimately with the mystery of her son, but in a kind of "dark night of faith". "She went forward in a pilgrimage of faith", as the Vatican Council says.

The same thing took place during Jesus's public life. And, at the foot of the cross, she consented once again to her son's sacrifice, out of faith. That death seemed a terrible denial of the words of the annunciation: "The Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father", but she stayed with her son while he was put to death, "a sign of contradiction", as Simeon had foretold. "Happy are you who have believed" took on then an immense resonance. Mary's faith destroyed the effect of Eve's disobedience; she was transformed into the new and real "mother of the living", as the Church fathers had already understood.

"If, as 'full of grace', she has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she became a sharer in that mystery in every extension of her earthly journey" (n.19).

Jesus himself, in his public ministry and from high up on the cross, gave new meaning to Mary's motherhood. He announced the Kingdom of God. Within this sphere of God's fatherhood, every human relationship like motherhood takes on new meaning. And because of her faith, because of her adhesion to the word of God (cf Lk 11,27-28

and 9,20-21), Mary discovered and welcome, as her son's first "disciple", this new spiritual dimension of motherhood. Hence her behaviour at the Cana wedding, a scene of great symbolic value, in which she exhibited her care for people in their need ("They have no more wine") and in her role as spokeswoman of Christ's will ("Do whatever he tells you"). Mary is there between her son and the rest of mankind, in the function of mediatrix, in a maternal mission that "no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ", but rather shows its efficacy.

As the Vatican Council says, Mary "is our mother in the order of grace", which becomes particularly clear when the words Jesus spoke to Mary at Cana and on the cross are compared. Both times he calls her "woman", in an allusion to Eve, designating in this manner Mary's unique role in the story of salvation willed by God. In giving her as mother to John, he makes her not just his mother but the mother of all the disciples, of the whole Church. At Nazareth, alone and within the sphere of Pentecost, together with the disciples she is the Mother, when the Word and the Church are born from the Spirit.

## II. The Mother of God at the Center of the Pilgrim Church

The Church is walking as a pilgrim through space and time, and also walking interiorly, in faith, in the midst of the world's persecutions and God's consolations. On this pilgrimage Mary is present, right from the start in the Cenacle. She did not directly receive her mission from the apostles, but she was with them when they were being prepared by God to take it on.

In the eyes of the infant Church, she was already "an exceptional witness to the mystery of Jesus", "the first to believe", right from the annunciation and from the Lord's childhood, on through Calvary and up to the resurrection in which "the promise had begun to be converted into reality". This heroic faith of Mary's preceded the Church's apostolic testimony. All those who accept this testimony take part in Mary's faith and contemplate

it in the light of the Word become flesh. The Magnificat's prophecy will become true: "All generations will call me blessed". Elizabeth's greeting to "she who has believed" is extended. Everyone will seek in Mary's faith support for their own faith. The Lord's disciples, in every nation, "will persevere in prayer in Mary's company, she, the mother of Jesus" (cf Act 1,14), while they hope to find themselves once again one day with the one who received the "throne of David, his father", the one "whose reign will have no end".

This presence of Mary's is expressed in many ways and has a wide radius of action: it goes through the faith of the faithful, of families, in the great sanctuaries and places of Marian pilgrimage. Faith, in Mary and in ourselves, has opened up and opens up an interior space that the Father can fill "with every kind of spiritual benediction" in the new and eternal covenant. In Mary's own faith, the Church generates the total Christ, when it works to "gather up in him all humanity", in the unity of his spirit.

In this age of ecumenism, we are made glad by the fact that other Christian communities venerate Mary too, and we would wish that everyone give depth to their common faith, progressing in two inseparable aspects of the mystery of salvation: the ministry of the Church and Mary's function. Why not look at her as at the common mother who prays for the humanity of God's family? All the eastern churches, Orthodox, Coptic and Ethiopian, celebrate Mary, mother of God, in their literature, in their liturgies, and in their icons. Together with them and in dialogue with the other church communities of the west, we could "more perfectly sing and live" the church's Magnificat, the Church that is moving on its path.

In this canticle Mary expresses "an inspired profession of faith" in "answer to the word of the revelation", to God's gift of his self in Christ. Full of wonder, she acknowledges that God's whole plan of salvation, as it was revealed in the covenant, converged in her. The Church that makes its earthly path conform to Mary's, tirelessly

repeats her Magnificat. In it the Church finds and proclaims "the unshadowed truth about God" (not shadowed by Eve's suspicion since she had been deceived by the "father of lies"), as the source of every gift, from creation up to the sacrifice of His son. By this song, the Church goes on lighting, as does Jesus, humanity's intricate paths and goes on "announcing the Good News to the poor". This preferential love for the poor is written into the Magnificat itself and is inseparable from the truth about God that saves, and the Christian sense of freedom and of liberation.

### III. Maternal Mediation

We have only one mediator between God and human-kind (I Tim. 2,5-6). The maternal role of Mary is only "mediation" within Christ's mediation. Her saving influence exists only because of Christ's merits and comes out of them. She does not prevent, but rather encourages our immediate union with Christ. But, just as other creatures cooperate in the redeemer's sole mediation, she does so in a special and extraordinary manner, by virtue of her divine motherhood.

In the annunciation, declaring herself to be the "handmaid of the Lord", Mary submits to the sole mediation of Jesus Christ, accepting the task of being his mother. Her total gift of herself to God in her virginity brings her to this spontaneous consent, under the action of the Holy Spirit. And God the father too gives himself to this virgin, giving her his son. Mary is thus transformed into the "singularly generous companion of the Messiah and Redeemer", and her "ardent charity", deriving from her being "full of grace", embraces all those that Christ has come to save. Right from the Cenacle her mediation and intercession have continued on through the centuries. Thus it is that the Church calls her Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix.

By her Assumption Mary joins the pilgrim Church on earth with the eschatological and heavenly reality

(i.e. the final and definitive reality) of the Communion of the Saints in the glory of Christ. Queen of the Universe, just as Christ is servant and king because he serves, she "the handmaid of the Lord", shares the glory of serving, right up to the end of time, cooperating so that "God will be all in all", and so that "all things will have Christ as their head".

In her capacity as virgin and mother, Mary is a "type", that is, a model of the Church that is a mother too, in so far as she faithfully receives God's word and generates the children that God gives her. Mary is at the service of the incarnation, and the Church is at the service of our adoption as children of God. Both keep themselves faithful to their "spouse" in a consecrated virginity, Mary as the perfect model, the Church in its attempt to resemble her.

Furthermore, Mary cooperates in the generation and in the education of the children of God, by virtue of her motherhood in the order of grace. Mother of the "first-born among many brothers and sisters", she implores the gift of the Spirit that will make of us too his children. And she guides us towards the Eucharist in which Christ manifests himself with the body that she gave him.

Her motherhood, like human motherhood, is a single unique relationship, one not to be repeated, with each of her children. Hence the use of the singular when John is given to Mary (and Mary to John) at the foot of the Cross: "This is your son". This motherhood is a gift given by Christ to each human being. And each human being responds with a unique devotion to the mother of God, just as John received her on becoming her son. He enters into her sphere of action and hears her say "do whatever he tells you" since she always remains the humble "servant" of God, at the service of Christ's mediation.

This current Marian year fits within the framework laid down by the last Council and invites those so wishing to read what it says about Mary, not just as a doctrine of faith, but as a means towards leading a life

of faith. At issue then is spirituality, in this case, Marian spirituality. The Church is called not just to remember, but as well to accept Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation in Christ, at the end of this second Christian millennium and within the first millennium of the evangelization of Russia. As the Council requests, let us pray that all people be "happily reunited in peace and concord as one people, the People of God, for the glory of the holy Trinity".

The liturgy says: "O Mary, Loving Mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea, assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again. To the astonishment of creation you bore the Creator!".

At the center of the mystery of God, a mystery that is inscrutable in itself and still more so in the incarnation, Mary's role fills us with wonder. She is there where the great change of humanity takes place. And she lends assistance so that, in the name of Christ, humanity may go from "falling" to "getting up again", today, and tomorrow, just as yesterday.

#### How to benefit from this reading of the encyclical

- 1) Read the whole piece with pencil in hand, giving it your maximum attention, since the Pope isn't setting forth an abstract theory on Mary, but rather he is characterizing her concrete itinerary, and ours, in relation to hers.
- 2) Thus, the subject has been dealt with spiritually and dynamically, or, if you like, historically. Note the plenitude of words expressing the idea of movement: pilgrimage, path, itinerary...
- 3) Let everybody note what they would like to discuss with their community. Then, put your discoveries

together, as well as your questions. For example: what does Advent mean? How should these years to come, be lived through as an Advent? What does it mean to see Christian existence as a pilgrimage?

4) Some topics for further reflection:

- the fruitfulness of Mary's faith, and ours;
- how do I appreciate Mary's motherhood?
- how do we understand the Magnificat?
- What is the deep lying meaning of virginity, and of chastity within marriage?
- in Christ, in Mary, serving is reigning and reigning is serving: how do we understand this? how do we apply it in our lives?
- if we want to take part in changing humanity, how can Mary's presence, and our invoking her, help us?

Guido Jonquieres s.j.



## GROWING IN OUR FAITH, WITH MARY, MOTHER OF THE REDEEMER

The 1988 World CLC Day was dedicated to deepening the marian dimension of Our Spirituality by celebrating, in communion with the whole Church, the MARIAN YEAR. The reflection that follows was prepared for the purpose of helping the National Communities celebrate the World day. The echoes that we have received suggest that this material can still be very helpful for meetings of the various local communities.

During his homily in St Peter's Basilica on the Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, 1st Jan. 1987, the Holy Father announced the Marian Year. In paragraph n.7 the Pope had this to say, addressing our Lady:

"Blessed are you who believed!

The Evangelist says of you: "Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart" (Lk, 2,19) You are the Church's memory! The Church learns from you, O Mary, that to be a mother means to be a living Memory, means to treasure and reflect in the heart on all of the events of men and women and peoples - the joyous events as well as the sad ones.

Among the many events in 1987 we desire to recall to the Church's memory the six hundredth anniversary of the 'Baptism' of Lithuania, drawing near in prayer to our brothers and sisters who have persevered for so many centuries united to Christ in the faith of the Church. Yet, how many other events, how many hopes, yet how many threats, how many joys, yet how many sufferings... what great sufferings! We must all, as a Church, treasure and meditate on these events in our hearts, just like the Mother. We must ever learn more from you, O Mary, how to be Church in this passing of the millenium."

## How to use these guidelines

The material is divided into two parts. It constitutes Parts I and II of the Encyclical Redemptoris Mater of our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. I have quoted from a number of paragraphs, but suggest that those leading the prayer take time to read the two sections of the Encyclical, i.e. Paragraphs 7-24 and 25-37. I suggest one or more meetings could be devoted to the first part of the material, and then to choose whether to continue immediately with the second half or to go through it after a certain period of time. The material is not easily broken up and that is the nature of our reality. The titles of the two sections given in the Encyclical are :

- A. Mary in the Mystery of Christ
- B. The Mother of God at the Centre of the Pilgrim Church

One way of summing up and distinguishing these two sections could be the words of Henri Nouwen: "To contemplate is to see. To minister is to make visible what we see". So our aim is to deepen our awareness of the Holy Spirit in our lives and to reflect on the practical expression of this same Spirit of Jesus in our lives for one another, especially for those of us who are marginalized in our countries.

In our celebration of the Marian Year, we take time to ponder the way that Mary, Our Blessed Mother, lived intimately with Jesus Her Son and lived out that reality among her neighbours.

So I suggest that we read the material, quietly and reflectively, and use that particular part of it, which really touches our hearts, for personal prayer. After this, it would be useful to review what happened during our prayer. Then we can go to our community meeting and share our reflections and benefit from the sharing of other people in our group.

## A. Mary in the Mystery of Christ:

"Only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery fully made clear" (Parag. 4)

"The Second Vatican Council, by presenting Mary in the mystery of Christ, also finds the path to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the Church. Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is in a particular way united with the Church, 'which the Lord established as his own body' (L.G. n.52)" (Parag. 5)

Mary listened and personally received the Word into her heart and then into her womb. The gift was fully from God. In Mary's case it began with her own conception. We believe in faith that, from the first moment of her conception, she was preserved from sin. Her response was fully hers. We celebrate this in the mystery of the Incarnation and see it unfolding fully throughout her life.

The Holy Father puts it this way:

"The blessing uttered by Elizabeth at the Visitation: 'Blessed is she who believed' reaches its full meaning when Mary stands beneath the Cross of her Son (Jn 19,25). Mary 'faithfully preserved her union with her Son even to the Cross'. It is a union through faith - the same faith with which she had received the angel's revelation at the Annunciation. At that moment she had also heard the words: 'He will be great... and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end' (Lk 1, 32-33) And now, standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary is the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of these words" (Par. 18)

This brings out the meaning very graphically of the words in the previous paragraph:

"Jesus was aware that 'no one knows the Son except the Father' (Mt 11,27); thus even his Mother, to whom had been revealed most completely the mystery of his divine sonship, lived in intimacy with mystery only through faith. Living side by side with her Son under the same roof, and faithfully persevering 'in her union with her Son', she 'advanced in her pilgrimage of faith', as the Council emphasizes." (Par. 17)

"Blessed are you who believed!" "The Virgin Mary advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son into the Cross" (Par.2, quote LG 58). In that Spirit, Mary could echo in her heart the words of Jesus on the Cross: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." (Lk 23,34)

This is why the Holy Father can say: "Only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery made clear". It is the same for us too and is magnificently expressed in the words of a Russian bishop. He wrote the following words as he went to his death in one of Stalin's purges:

"There will come a day when the martyr will be able to stand before the throne of God in defence of his persecutors and say, 'Lord, I have forgiven in thy name and by thy example. Thou hast no claim against them any more'".

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The gift, par excellence, became a reality for all of us. We are the Body of the resurrected Lord. We live in "the fulness of time".

Mary pondered all these things in her heart. Let me ponder my life and count my blessings. Though I might not find a blessing in all the events of my life, let me look to the faith of Mary who found in the Mystery of Jesus the way to find a blessing coming from God even in those experiences where the world does not expect a blessing. She was poor, she was exiled - a refugee, she

lost her husband, she witnessed the violent death of her only Son. She always kept in touch with the Spirit of Our Father, which is offered to all of us. In this way she could be faithful and loving to her husband, her relatives and neighbours. In times of pain and isolation she could live in the Spirit of Hope. Throughout her life she could rejoice.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some suggestions to focus our reflections:

1. The Holy Father says to Mary, Our Lady: "You are the Church's memory!" I am called to share in that remembering. So I might go to Mary and ask her what it was that she remembered.
2. We often hear and use the phrase: "To Jesus through Mary". In his Encyclical, the Holy Father complements the truth of this so that we can say: "To Mary through Jesus". (cf. Par. n. 26). Let me reflect on this.
3. We might ponder the opening verses of the Magnificat:

"And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.'" (Lk 1, 46-48)

In what way do I proclaim the greatness of the Lord in my life?

\* \* \* \* \*

B. The Mother of God at the Centre of the Pilgrim Church:

During our pilgrimage through life we are always sustained and loved by God. God Our Loving Father is always present to us in Jesus Our Lord through His Spirit who is the Spirit of Jesus. The first person to bear witness to this life within us is Mary the Mother of Jesus and therefore Mother of God.

Let us ponder the words of the Holy Father:

"The Mother of that Son, therefore, mindful of what has been told her at the Annunciation and in subsequent events, bears within herself the radical 'newness' of faith: the beginning of the New Covenant. This is the beginning of the Gospel, the joyful Good News. However, it is not difficult to see in that beginning a particular heaviness of heart, linked with a sort of 'night of faith' - to use the words of St John of the Cross - a kind of 'veil' through which one has to draw near to the Invisible One and to live in intimacy with the mystery. And this is the way that Mary, for many years, lived in intimacy with the mystery of her Son, and went forward in her 'pilgrimage of faith', while Jesus 'increased in wisdom... and in favour with God and man' (Lk 2,52). God's predilection for him was manifested ever more clearly to people's eyes. The first human creature thus permitted to discover Christ was Mary, who lived with Joseph in the same house at Nazareth." (Redemptoris Mater, Par. 17)

Her faith, her listening to God's Spirit in her heart, made her utterly open to the mission of Her Son. Consequently, in the words of the Fathers of the Church, her faith made her "mother of the living" (cf. Lumen Gentium, par. 56). We can ponder her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the flight into Egypt, her anxiety and search for Jesus when he was lost and found in the Temple, her presence at Calvary and in the Upper Room when the disciples were waiting for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. She continues to reach out in comfort and love to those in need. What sustains her is her deep awareness of the Spirit of the Father and her Son Who calls her continually in faith, hope and love. Her living in faith and loving others become one. "Love one another as I have Loved you". She was free for others. In her faith we find support for our own.

Listen again to the words of the Encyclical:

"In the expression 'Blessed is she who believed', we can therefore rightly find a kind of 'key' which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as 'full of grace'. If as 'full of grace' she has been eternally present in the mystery of Christ, through faith she became a sharer in that mystery in every extension of her earthly journey. She 'advanced in her pilgrimage of faith' and at the same time, in a discreet yet direct and effective way, she made present to humanity the mystery of Christ, and she still continues to do so. Through the mystery of Christ, she too is present within mankind. Thus through the mystery of the Son the mystery of the Mother is also made clear. (Redemptoris Mater, P. 19)

The Holy Father reminds us of an important message from the Vatican Council II, which puts well the constant need to remember like Mary did:

"Moving forward through trial and tribulation, the Church is strengthened by the power of God's grace promised to her by the Lord, so that in weakness of the flesh she may not waver from perfect fidelity, but remain a bride worthy of her Lord; that moved by the Holy Spirit she may never cease to renew herself, until through the Cross she arrives at the light which knows no setting." (Lumen Gentium, par. 9)

Mary's constant place within the Church is expressed through the Magnificat:

"Mary truly proclaims the coming of the 'Messiah of the poor' (cf. Is 11,4; 61,1). Drawing from Mary's heart, from the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the Magnificat, the Church renews ever more effectively in herself the awareness that the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus.

The Church is thus aware - and at the present time this awareness is particularly vivid - not only that these two elements of the message contained in the Magnificat cannot be separated, but also that there is a duty to safeguard carefully the importance of 'the poor' and of 'the option in favour of the poor' in the word of the living God. These are matters and questions intimately connected with the Christian meaning of freedom and liberation. 'Mary is totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards him, and, at the side of her Son, she is the most perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe. It is to her as Mother and Model that the Church must look in order to understand in its completeness the meaning of her own mission'". (Redemptoris Mater, Par. 37)

\* \* \* \* \*

Some suggestions to focus our reflections:

1. I might ponder the way that Mary grew in her understanding of mission by her closeness to Jesus. In 1980 the Holy Father spoke to a group of handicapped people. He said:

"The only proper answer to God's call of the Blessed Virgin was: "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1,38). Only your prompt 'Yes' to God's will, which is often beyond our human comprehension, can make you blessed and bestow on you, even now, a deep joy that cannot be destroyed from outside by any misery".

Let me pray through Mary for the desire to enter into the mystery of God's love. Maybe I am afraid to speak the truth, maybe I don't want to forgive somebody who has wronged me, maybe I am attached to something or somebody which makes me sad and unhappy.



2. I might recall the theme of the World CLC Assembly at Loyola:

Mary Model of our Mission -

"Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2,5).

Her response, in unison with the Holy Spirit, is an encouragement for me. Somebody who is united with the Spirit of Jesus will know the gifts of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control". (Gal 5,22)

As I ponder the great issues of our day, e.g. arms control and development of peoples, drug and alcohol dependency, the Aids epidemic, etc., do I experience Hope over against despair, Love over hate and fear? Let me face this in my prayer.

Tim Quinlan s.j.

## MARY AND THE UNITY OF ALL CHRISTIANS

Since the path of the Church today is marked by the sign of ecumenism and since there are CLC both in the East and in the West, we thought it would be helpful to present separately this summary of ch.2 of the second part of "Redemptoris Mater". It shows how Mary can help towards the unity of all Christians.

There is no doubt that the action of the Holy Spirit in the various Churches directs and pushes the faithful towards the construction of one fold under one shepherd. This brings to mind in a special way Lumen Gentium N.15: the progress of the Church, especially in our times, manifests this action of the Spirit because it is deeply marked by the sign of ecumenism. The Spirit, in fact, cannot but push forward the realization of the supreme will of Christ who, before departing from this world, prayed: "May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (John 17,21). The unity of Christ's disciples is one of the great signs given to stir up faith, while their division constitutes a scandal (cf Unitatis Redintegratio n.1).

As regards the Catholic Church, the ecumenical movement has found its most meaningful expression in the Second Vatican Council, taken both globally, as a "moment of the Church", and in those documents which specifically treat this theme.

Therefore, if ecumenism is not progressing, or is progressing slowly, it is not because it lacks orientation or a clear vision: it is because we have not put ourselves in the attitude of that "obedience of faith" of which Mary was the first and most brilliant example. This, therefore, is how Mary faces this great problem of the unity of

Christians. Let us once more listen to Vatican II: since Mary "shines forth on earth, until the day the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God", "it gives great joy and comfort to this holy synod that among the separated brethren too there are those who give due honor to the Mother of Our Lord and Saviour, especially among the Eastern..."(L.G.68-69).

Not only does Mary not appear, here, as an obstacle to the unity of the Churches, but she represents that example of "obedience in faith" which is, in fact, the very foundation of the tension towards unity.

Christians know that their unity can only be build on the unity of faith. There are profound doctrinal disagreements which divide them and which concern the mystery and ministry of the Church. In some cases this extends to Mary's function in the history of salvation. Work is being done on these points with our separated brethren from the West. If the mystery of the Word incarnate makes us perceive the mystery of the Mother of God and if the contemplation of the Mother of God introduces us into a deeper understanding of the Incarnation, the same can be affirmed of the mystery of the Church and of Mary's function in the work of salvation.

"Do whatever He tells you": those Christians who wish to put into practice Mary's invitation will be able to progress in that "journey of faith" of which Mary was an example. They will be able to lay the foundations of that unity willed by their One Lord and so desired by those who are listening to what "the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches today" (Ap.2,7-11-17).

There is then, a consoling and significant agreement among the Christian confessions concerning the Blessed virgin: all acknowledge her as the mother of Jesus the Saviour and consider this to be part of the belief in Christ, true God and true Man. Why, therefore do we not turn to her together as our common Mother?

A special consonance unites the Oriental Churches, and in particular the orthodox Church, with the Catholic Church in the invocation of Her who is called the "Theotokos". It is enough to keep in mind that not only the principal dogmas which concern the Christian faith with regards to the Word made flesh in the womb of the Virgin have been defined by councils held in the East, but that even in their cult the Orientals venerate the Virgin Mary with splendid hymns that are full of faith.

The history of these Churches has often been tormented and marked by persecutions, but there has always remained alive in them a strong Christian commitment and a remarkable apostolic liveliness. It is a history of fidelity to the Lord during which the Christians of the East have always turned to the Lord's Mother with boundless trust.

The Churches that profess the doctrine of Ephesus proclaim the virgin "true Mother of God". The Greek Fathers and the Byzantine tradition contemplate the Virgin in the light of the Word made flesh and have sought to penetrate the link which unites Mary to her Son and to the Church. The Coptic and Ethiopian traditions, under the guidance of St Cyril of Alexandria, have learned how to know and love the Mother of Christ, while Saint Ephrem the Syrian (called "the Holy Spirit's lyre") has tirelessly exalted Mary. He has left behind him a tradition that is still alive in the Syrian Church today. Gregory of Narek, one of the most outstanding figures of the Armenian Church, has a very beautiful panegyric on the Theotokos in which he throws light on the maternity of Mary, starting exactly with the Annunciation. The characteristic aspects of Marian theology in the various Churches express an extraordinary consonance, notwithstanding the diverse emphases. We can recall the divine office for the various hours in the Byzantine liturgy. We find not only the praise of the Son and of the Spirit, but also and always, the praise of the Virgin. In the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, right after the epiclesis, the congregation

sings to the Mother of God: "It is indeed right to proclaim you blessed, O Theotòkos, you who are most blessed, all pure and Mother of our God. We exalt you who are more honorable than the cherubims and incomparably more glorious than the seraphims. You who, without losing your virginity, have given birth to the Word of God, you who are truly the Mother of God".

These praises which are sung to Mary in every Liturgy have forged the faith, piety and prayer of the faithful through the ages.

Pope John Paul II has reminded us of an important date, i.e. the XII centenary of the Second Nicene Council, in which the doctrine of the images against the iconoclasts (i.e. those who wanted to destroy images) was defined. It was affirmed there that, images of the Virgin Mary, together with those of the Cross, could be offered for the veneration of the faithful. This gave birth to various titles of the Virgin which indicate many different "trends" in devotion or theological emphasis, whose richness is a most important patrimony for all the Churches. Thus Mary is called:

Theotòkos: Mother of God,

Odigitria: Way that leads to Christ,

Deisis: praying in an attitude of intercession for the faithful,

Pokrov: Protectress who spreads her cloak over the nations,

Eleousa: merciful Virgin of tenderness

In the beauty of these images the West too can feel at ease, because they express a profound theology on which it is impossible not to agree. It is sufficient to recall Our Lady of Vladimir, so well known to us, who has constantly accompanied the faith of Russia.

In all these images, the Virgin shines brightly as a mirror of the divine beauty, dwelling-place of the

eternal Wisdom, figure of the praying person, icon of glory.

So much richness in the tradition about Mary could make it possible for the Church to start breathing again fully with both lungs, the East and the West, helping the dialogue between the Oriental Churches and the Catholic Church. In the search for unity, Mary could become an effective aid and a solid point of reference during the journey.

\* \* \* \* \* FOR OUR PRAYER \* \* \* \* \*

\*  
\* To foster unity within the Church \*  
\* and between the Churches \*  
\* means educating ourselves for dialogue \*  
\* rather than enhancing diversity \*  
\* while remaining faithful to our own faith. \*  
\* What can I do in this area of ecclesial life? \*

\* JOHN 17, 1 - 26 \*

\* Let's try to make our own \*  
\* the desires of Jesus Christ about unity \*  
\* and let's confide this urgency to Mary. \*

\* \* \* \* \*

Francesco Botta s.j.

## SECOND PART

UNITED WITH ALL PEOPLES,  
LET US SING TO THE GOD WHO SAVES US

In this second part, we publish a series of articles written in several nations of the world. Each of them develops one or other trait of the inexhaustible richness of Mary's figure, and puts us closer to the plurality of cultures within the World Community of CLC. These articles are not theological reflections, but expressions of the life of faith, and of Mary's presence within it, as it is actually experienced by the authors or their National Communities.

## YOU HAVE FOUND FAVOUR WITH GOD

How can Mary help Christians today to actually live an authentic missionary life? The take-over of Hong Kong by the communists in 1997 is the starting point of this article that proposes some responses for us.

In addition to this being the Marian Year, the CLC has always had a special attachment and devotion to Mary, Our Blessed Mother. She is also our model in the following of Christ. My intention in this article is to reflect prayerfully on certain passages of Scripture which describe Mary and apply some thoughts and questions, which arise from these meditations, to the CLC in Hong Kong.

Superficially, the main problem facing the people in Hong Kong, the Church in Hong Kong and the CLC in Hong Kong is "1997" or the Communist take-over of Hong Kong in nine years time. How can Mary help us at this crucial time in our history? One way is for us to pray to Mary. Another way is to reflect on Mary's reaction to certain events which occurred in her life so that we can model ourselves on her or get some guidance from her. This article, in a sense, is a combination of these two ways. These very specific, not to say parochial and insular, concerns of the Hong Kong CLC may appear, at first sight, to have nothing to do with the World CLC community, but I hope that on closer reading all members of the CLC will find something that will interest them in these pages.

### The Annunciation

One of the greatest events in Mary's life was when she was told that she would be the mother of the Holy One. It is interesting to see her immediate reaction to the message from the Angel Gabriel; it is not, as is often



depicted, an immediate acceptance. Instead, she asks how this is to be, since she does not "know" man (Lk 1:34). She did not simply and passively accept God's invitation. She assumed a questioning or critical stance concerning the circumstances of her bearing the son of God. It never ceases to amaze me how respectful God is of his creatures. He not only approached Mary to ask her consent, but he also initially accepts a critical response from Mary: Scripture records that her first reaction was one of an intelligent, questioning human being. She wanted to know how it was possible for her to bear the Son of the Most High under the circumstances.

I am sure that members of the CLC also assumed a critical attitude on hearing the news that we would be taken over by the Communists in nine years time. Mary was to give birth to the Son of God in nine months time; are we, in a sense, now being offered an opportunity to bring forth the Son of God in nine years time? At the moment we do not see how this is possible since the communists are an atheistic government, and although the Joint Declaration between the United Kingdom and Communist China guarantees religious freedom, we still do not see how the take-over can possibly be an occasion for "giving birth" to Jesus. This is understandable, just as Mary's reaction to the Angel's message was initially a question. But we know the Angel Gabriel's answer: The Holy Spirit will over-shadow you... (Lk 1:32ff).

Do we believe that the Holy Spirit can also overshadow us and that Jesus' reign will never have an end? Do we believe that Jesus will be Emmanuel or God-with-us in nine years time and beyond? Or do we think that the forces of darkness will overcome the forces of light? Having been assured of God's personal intervention in her life Mary accepts the invitation to be Theotokos or bearer of the Son of God. Do we in the Hong Kong CLC accept the fact of 1997 and also accept our role to bring forth Jesus, to become Christophers or Bearers of Christ, after the communist take-over?

## 1997 - A Moment of Grace

So often the communist take-over of 1997 has been viewed and spoken of as a total calamity. Certainly, there are some regrettable elements in the take-over. When I reflect on Mary I realize that she knew her scriptures and she probably guessed that she and her son would suffer much, but she did not see this as a complete misfortune. Even if she could have foreseen the cruel death of her son (suppose she took Isaiah ch.53 as a prophecy of her son's fate) would she have considered her lot an absolute disaster? I do not believe she would have changed her reply even for one second if she had foreseen the tragic death of her son. Once it had been made clear to her that the bearing of Jesus was God's will and that he would take charge of the difficulties Mary immediately accepted.

Are the CLC members in Hong Kong reluctant to accept God's will still? (I believe something is the will of God if one can in no way change it and the communist take-over in 1997 is certainly something that we cannot change. Therefore it is God's will, at least God's permissive will). Do we believe that we can still bring forth Jesus under a communist regime after 1997? Ultimately, do we believe that God is in charge or in control of our future? Can we actually see 1997 as a moment not only of God's permissive will, but as a moment of grace? Could 1997 not be a special moment in the history of Hong Kong, of China and perhaps we should not only accept this possibility in some notional way: that is, we should not only accept that theoretically 1997 can be a moment of grace. Unless I really see the 1997 communist take-over as a possible moment of grace in my life this grace may never touch me: Hong Kong, China, the world and even God, can all be viewed as irrelevant and extraneous to me.

If Mary were here in Hong Kong now is it not conceivable that she would see and accept the communist take-over in 1997 as a possible moment of grace in her own life, in the life of Hong Kong, of China and perhaps in the salvation of the world? When Mary accepted to be the mother of Jesus, one of her main reasons for doing so, in

addition to this being the will of God, was that her acceptance and the birth of her Son were moments of grace in her life and in the life of Israel; she may even vaguely have understood that her "fiat" was instrumental for the salvation of the world.

It is exceedingly difficult to accept that our being taken over by atheistic communists, i.e., by godless men, can be a moment of Grace or of God giving himself to us. But then was not the crucifixion and death of Christ just such a moment: did not the powers of darkness seem to completely triumph over the powers of light? And yet was it not at that very moment that the darkness of evil was embraced by an even greater darkness - the blinding light of God's Unconditional Love for the godless? Is this not the real meaning of the Paschal Mystery - that evil and sin in the very midst of their being exercised are changed into light and glory by the one force in the universe that is more powerful than all else, i.e., Love?

#### Other Thoughts

What other country or city in the world has been given ten years to prepare for a communist take-over? Did South Vietnam know when they would be taken over? Did Czarist Russia know? Did Poland know? We know the exact time and the hour when the take-over will occur. Surely this is a blessing and we can prepare and thank God for it.

Moreover, do we realize that Mary is the Patroness of China, the China we shall ourselves be part of in nine years time? Do we not think that Mary has a special love for China and her one billion people? Do we realize too that Mary is the Patroness of Hong Kong? Wouldn't she have a special love for us, the people of Hong Kong at this critical time in our history?

#### The Visitation

Immediately after accepting the invitation to become the mother of God with all the joys and sorrows it entailed, Mary did not sit around contemplating the new

life in her womb or worry about what the future held for her or for her son. She had more urgent business to attend to: her relative, Elizabeth, in her old-age, had also conceived and she would be requiring help to deliver her first-born. Mary knew that births were painful at the best of times, but for an old woman to bear her first child special care would be needed and required. She was not asked to help; she went of her own accord out of love for Elizabeth.

What were my thoughts when I learned about the communist take-over in 1997? Did I start worrying about my own future, about the future of my family, about the future of the CLC, about the future of the Church and about religious freedom? Or did I look around to see who really needed my help? Was I so concerned about my own problems that I did not have the energy or the inclination to look outward beyond myself? Did I beg my Heavenly Father to give me the grace to act like my Blessed Mother, i.e., to turn outwards away from my joys or problems and to turn towards those in need? I pray now that I may have the heart and mind of Mary who although she was chosen as mother of God did not concern herself with her new dignity and position, but considered instead the needs of her aged relative, Elizabeth.

When Mary prayed her Magnificat (Lk. 2:46-55) it was clear that the God she was praying to had a great, preferential love for the poor and the lowly: he preferred them to the rich, the powerful and the proud. This is the God I am asked to imitate; I should be perfect or holy, just as my heavenly Father is Perfect or Holy (cf. Mt 5.48).

Have I asked myself who are really in need in Hong Kong? Who are the poor for whom I should have this preferential love? I pray to my heavenly Father, through the intercession of Mary, my mother, that I may not be caught in my own narrowness but may be totally committed to the needs of those who are poor, oppressed and those in need in Hong Kong, in China and in other parts of the world. One thing is clear, the rich are leaving Hong Kong.

The poor cannot leave: preferential love for the poor must in some way be an option for those who have to stay. Not that we do not love the emigres, but we love the anawim or poor who have nowhere to go more.

There is a story from one of the Orthodox Churches which might help us to reflect on the above point. The story goes like this. When St. Andrew went up to heaven he met Christ, his Master, and he began to look for Mary, but he could not find her anywhere. After a while, Jesus asked him what he was looking for. He answered that he was looking for His mother. Then Jesus looked at him in astonishment and said: "She is not here! She is back on earth with the poor. Did you not know this?"

It seems obvious that if Christians begin to work in earnest for the poor and needy so that the majority of the Christian Churches are fully committed to helping the under-privileged by 1997, the communist take-over will be much less a problem. But if we Christians think of nothing else but emigrating, or our own safety, or our own freedom then we are doomed because we have ceased to follow our Brother Jesus who came to serve and not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10.45).

#### Our Demented God

Another scene in the Bible that I have prayed about is that described in Mark 3:19-35. Here it might seem that Mary is among those who do not know what Jesus is about or what he is doing. They think he is crazy. Catholics often skip over this passage because Mary might appear in an unfavourable light. Indeed, both Matthew and Luke correct the impression that Mary is somehow at fault (cf. Mt. 12:46-50 and Lk. 8:19-21). This shows that even in the early Church Christians had difficulty with this passage. Whatever the interpretation of Mark ch.3, the question still remains whether I, in my less guarded moments, think that Jesus, the omniscient and the all-powerful, is crazy for allowing this take-over of Hong Kong by godless men in 1997. Perhaps, God the Father was also crazy in allowing his Beloved Son to be crucified by

godless men and to die, seemingly abandoned by all, on the cross. I am overwhelmed when I realize that this madness of God was for me: he sent his son to die FOR ME. It would take me a life-time or all eternity to fathom this crazy God because I know that this madness is Love because God is Love and he is madly in love with human kind; he is perhaps even madly in love with ME.

### Other questions arise

How godless are the men taking over in 1997? Are all the one billion mainland Chinese godless? Do none of the one billion (here let us not include the Christians in China in our present consideration) know Christ or love him in any way? When Christ said "I am the way, the truth and the life" (cf. John 14.6), is it not possible that those who follow the truth, the truth as their consciences present it, are in fact following Christ who is the Truth. Sure, these "godless" men would be the last to admit that they are following Christ, but would they refuse to admit (at least to themselves and before their own consciences) that they must follow and have followed the truth as they see it. I do not expect them to call this truth Jesus, or to call the following of their consciences the following of Jesus. But what does it matter what they call it, provided they do it. Even those of us who have all the right words could be in grave trouble on the Last Day, for not all who call Lord, Lord will enter the Kingdom of God, but those who do the will of the Father (cf Mt. 7. 21-22). Who am I to say that the communists are not doing the will of my Father? After all, Cyrus, the pagan, whom God called his shepherd and his anointed (cf. Is 44:28; 45:1), was to fulfil the divine plan and be the deliverer of Israel.

I am not sure of the answer to the question concerning how the godless are saved (if they are saved), but the God who so loves the world that he sent his son, not to judge but to save it, must surely have a way of saving it and of saving the "godless" men in it. It boggles my mind that a God who loves me so much (and this due to no merit or intrinsic value on my part, but out of his graciousness) would somehow allow this one billion of my people to be condemned to hell for all eternity.

I overheard a conversation between a priest and a fundamentalist Christian once. The fundamentalist insisted that unless we were born again and accepted Jesus Christ explicitly we could not be saved. The priest then asked him whether the one billion men and women in China who had not heard of Christ were therefore condemned. The born-again Christian said that they were. Then the priest flew into a rage and shouted: "Damn your God! I will have no part of him! He can go to hell, if he simply allows one billion of my people to go to hell for something they could not help. If this is the God you preach I will never accept him. The only God I will accept is a God of Unconditional and Infinite Love, which is the God revealed to us Christians. Your God is not the God of the Bible and not the God of Jesus". I believe that this conversation is worth reflecting on.

I have also reflected on the saying of our Lord "Greater love than this no man has than he lay down his life for his friend" (see John 15:13) and I have asked myself whether it is possible that no one among the one billion in China have laid down his/her life for his/her friend. I remember too that St Paul says that "the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). If this is the case then perhaps many of my people can or have been saved.

I leave this as an open question, but something tells me that God's madness, which in him is prodigal love, is wiser than my explanations or my understanding, and, fortunately, is wiser than theologians and other Churchmen who wish to condemn the so-called godless to eternal fire.

#### Behold your Son

Perhaps some will accuse me of being a crypto-communist for writing the above, i.e., for not condemning the communists outright. It is certainly possible that I am a secret follower of the devil without being fully conscious of this, so it is not unthinkable that I am a crypto-communist or an atheist without being completely aware of this. Perhaps I have already abandoned Jesus in

my heart of hearts, without being completely conscious of this. Be that as it may! I hope the Beloved Disciple meant what he said when he wrote "If our hearts condemn us know that God is greater than our heart" (1 Jn 3:20). He should know for didn't he desert Jesus like the rest of the disciples (cf. Mk 14.50). But he did come back and was standing by the cross when Jesus asked his mother to look at her son.

The disciple whom Jesus loved - what a marvellous thing to be! Was this merely applied to John who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper? I too am a disciple whom Jesus loves even though I am totally unworthy of this love. And if this Jesus is the true son of the God who is Love (and I firmly believe that he is) then he too must love the world as much as his father. So he too must love the communists who are part of this world. Is it possible that, in a roundabout way, he may have made the godless marxists in China children of his mother as he was dying on the cross, since they too (at least those who follow the truth in their hearts) are his beloved disciples albeit anonymously. Then there are those who have laid down their lives for their friends or countrymen. Don't these also have the greatest love? How many of these are there, i.e., anonymous Christians and those who have sacrificed their lives? Only God knows the answer to these questions. Only the God who is Unconditional and Infinite Love knows the answer.

We know too that Mary is Patroness of China. Would her love not be for the whole chinese people? Of course, she loves, in a special way, those Christians who are poor and oppressed, but I hope and pray that she also loves the others in China.

I know that we must be as wise serpents and as innocent as doves. Perhaps there are godless men and women in China who are bent on destroying the Church of Christ, who are deliberately not following their consciences, who are knowingly and cruelly persecuting their fellow human beings. But whether there are such I leave to God to judge, because I am afraid to be judged myself. The



communist regime is a professedly atheistic one, and I must never forget this fact. But what one professes is not always what one is and believes deep down in one's heart of hearts. Anyway, am I godly or do I only appear to be so? Are all our Christians godly? I think I had better leave these questions for God (who is Unconditional Love) to answer. But I leave this question a little more humbly when I realize that the godly ones, the Pharisees, were often Jesus enemies and plotted to kill him (cf. Mk 3:6). Better that I pray like the Publican, unsure of myself and fully aware of my unworthiness, than stand before God thinking myself Godly.

### The woman clothed with the sun

Having said the above I still realize that we in Hong Kong may not be able to avoid being persecuted after 1997 for what we believe: for example, for our unwavering loyalty to the Pope. The Apocalypse gives us a symbolic image of a woman and her child being persecuted by the dragon. The woman has traditionally been taken to represent both the Church and our Blessed mother. I find it difficult to read the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse without in a certain way indentifying with the persecuted Church. Many fear this possible persecution, including, I am sure, members of CLC. Perhaps they do not fear this so much for themselves as for their children and their loved ones.

One question I have always wanted to ask Mary, our mother: Did she forgive the men who put her son to death? Did she pray for her son's enemies? I feel that I know the answer to these two questions: I am sure that she did pray for her son's killers and that she did forgive those responsible for the crucifixion, but somehow I have always wanted to ask Mary the questions. The main reason why these questions interest me is because I feel that the centre of our lived faith is reflected in the answers we give. If we forgive our enemies and those who persecute us, if we pray for those who do us injury, then we are truly children of our Father in heaven. If we do not pray for our enemies or forgive them can we claim to be any

better than the unbelievers or public sinners? Will we, the members of the CLC in Hong Kong, also forgive our enemies and those who persecute us and the ones we love? Will we pray for those who do us wrong? In the final analysis, do we believe that Christ lived and died to forgive those who were yet sinners (cf. Rm. 5:6-10)? And do we believe that we share in this mystery of Christ to pray and forgive our enemies; and to live and perhaps suffer and die for them?

The Christian message is indeed a very difficult message to communicate and to live. It is particularly difficult to live in a time of persecution and suffering. But it is also true that the Church has always flourished under persecution. Are we ready, with the help of God's grace, to accept this chalice of suffering and to grasp it with love, just as Christ did? "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will but what you will" (cf. Mark 14:36).

#### EPILOGUE

So then these rambling, impressionistic thoughts have come to an end. 1997 is, in my opinion, just a peripheral issue when it comes to the centre of our faith and to the heart of our life in the CLC. The important issues are: whether God is the most important value in our lives, or whether we put our safety, our family or our country before the One, True God who is Unconditional Love and the only One who can satisfy our hearts; whether we really trust in God, like Mary did; and whether we love our fellow human beings and are willing them to forgive them, especially those who are our enemies. Then there is the special mission and service of the CLC, to show preferential love for the poor in the concrete circumstances of their situation: Do we deliberately go out of our way to do this, or are we content to work, deal and live with the powerful and those from the middle class? This is the question not only for the CLC in Hong Kong but for Christians all over the world.

But I must not totally ignore the crisis facing the Hong Kong CLC. Since we are a world community, I ask CLC members all over the world to pray for us and to support us in our hour of need: may we remain loyal to Christ and his vicar on earth; may we love God and put him above all things including our lives, our families, our freedom and our country; may we love our neighbour as ourselves, especially those who are most in need; may we love and forgive our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

May God let us all experience his unconditional love for each and everyone of us; may we realize how precious we are in his sight and may we comprehend that we, like Mary, have found favour with him. Amen.

Marciano Baptista s.j.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### PRAYER

"Happy you who believed!"

O Mary, help me to believe.  
Tell me what it means to believe  
in your Son's Resurrection.

Behold, I shall tell you; make sure you do not forget it.

When you see the tempest tearing down the forest  
and the earthquakes shaking the earth  
and the fire burning your house  
say to yourself: I believe  
that the forest will grow again  
the earth will return to its stillness  
and I shall rebuild my house.

When you hear rumours of war  
and men die of fear all around you  
and "people rise against people  
and nation against nation" (Mt 24,7),  
tell yourself with extreme courage:  
"Christ had warned me and had added:  
'Fear not, lift up your heads for liberation is near!'"  
(Lk 21,28)

When sin strangles you  
and you feel you are choking and powerless  
tell yourself: "Christ has risen from the dead  
and I shall rise from my sin".

When old age and sickness  
tend to embitter your existence,  
tell yourself:  
"Christ rose from the dead  
and made new heavens and a new earth".

When you see your son run away from home  
in search of adventure  
and you feel defeated in your dream as father or mother,  
tell yourself: "My son will not escape God  
and he will return because God loves him".

When you see charity dying out around you  
and you see men driven ... to madness  
by their sin and drunk by their betrayals,  
tell yourself: "They will drink the cup to the dregs,  
but they shall turn back  
for one cannot live away from God".

When the world seems to you to be God's defeat  
and you feel the sickness of disorder,  
of violence, of terror, of war  
dominate in the marketplace  
and the earth seems to you to be chaos,  
tell yourself:  
"Christ has died and risen exactly to save  
and His salvation is already present among us".

When your mother or your father,  
your son or your daughter,  
your spouse, your dearest friend,  
lie on their deathbed in front of you  
and you stare at them in the anguish  
of mortal detachment,  
tell your self:

"Take heart, we shall meet again in the Kingdom".

This is what believing in th Resurrection means.  
But this is not enough.  
To believe in Christ Risen means more still.

It means for Mother Teresa of Calcutta  
to lift the dying man  
and for you to do the same.  
It means for Martin Luther King to face death  
and for you not to be afraid to face death  
for the sake of your brethren.  
It means for Abbe Schultz of Taizé  
to open his convent to hope  
and for you to open your house to hope.

Every missionary who sets out  
is an act of faith in the Resurrection.  
Every leprosarium that is opened  
is a "credo" in the Resurrection.  
Every peace treaty  
is an act of faith in the Resurrection.  
Every commitment accepted  
is an act of faith in the Resurrection.

When you forgive your enemy  
When you feed the hungry  
When you defend the weak  
you believe in the Resurrection.

When you have the courage to get married  
When you accept the child who will be born  
When you build your house  
You believe in the Resurrection.

When you get up in the morning feeling at peace  
When you sing to the rising sun  
When you go to work with joy  
you believe in the Resurrection.

\*\*\*\*

To believe in the Resurrection  
means to permeate life with confidence (trust)  
it means to give credit to your brother,  
it means to fear no one.

To believe in the Resurrection  
means to think that God is Father,  
Jesus is your brother  
and I, Mary, your sister  
and if you want, your Mother.

(Taken from "Cristiani nel Mondo", Publication of the  
Italian National CLC Community)

## MARY, THE NEW EVE

This article offers us the chance of sharing the fascinating memories which Mary's figure brings to the CLC members of Zaire. One of them presents here how they actually live the sense of the family, of fidelity, of respect for life and of welcoming warmly a new life. All these are realities that Mary empowers and inspires.

The marian Year we are celebrating invites us to share, as best we can, our black-African experience of Mary, Mother of God and Mother of all humanity, because we believe that each Christian lives this spiritual dimension deeply.

### 1. Mary, the faithful betrothed

"In the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a Virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1,26-27).

Mary, girl from Nazareth, lives fully her betrothal in God's light. She wants to preserve her virginity before her marriage. For us, black-Africans, the virgin girl has the possibility of having many children and of bringing good-luck, happiness to the couple and to the clan, which is the cell of humanity. The virgin girl is a blessing for him who marries her as well as for her parents; she has all that she needs to remain faithful to her husband. Thus, in certain tribes, the husband who marries a virgin offers a goat to his in-laws, as a sign of gratitude.

With regards to this, Fr Matungulu Otene sj, writes:

"Well before the Gospel was announced, therefore, our ancestors had undertook that in virginity lay a vital force, a source of life and of human growth. Continence was practised rigorously at certain moments in

life. And it still is today in order to safeguard and to strengthen the life that comes from God through the ancestors... There are those among us who have had a magnificent childhood and youth, because they have been able to grow in physical and spiritual virginity. There are others who have had a troubled childhood and youth, because they did not savour the sweet taste of a chaste life totally oriented towards God..." (from "Being with Christ, chaste, poor, obedient" pp 32-33).

## 2. God, source of all life

Wherever Mary meets a breath of life, she discovers God's touch. Life does not come from the genies, nor from the ancestors, but from God who is the sole author.

All that exists has been created by Him. For us, black-Africans, Mary's relationship to God is a vital relationship. What Mary seeks, in turning to God, is that He protect her life eternally (for our troubles come from our infidelity to God). Mary gives herself to God and reveals the secret of her deep self. She knows He is love, mercy and justice. By putting at the centre of her life, she rejects success such as the world understands it. She offers herself to God for the greatest service, becoming dependent on Him through faith and through loving her fellow men and women. Her unconditional acceptance of God's call makes her an extraordinary woman in the ordinary: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word" (Lk 1,38).

## 3. The warm reception

In most African families, the mother lavishes attention on the child from the moment it is born. The baby, once it comes out of a maternity hospital - where it has a cot - sleeps in the parents' bed for about two years. It lives in intense symbiosis with its family. It is the centre of much attention. Everyone in the family takes care of it. It spends hours on its mother's back while she works in her field or grinds the leaves of



manioca, all the while singing to her child all sorts of songs to lull him or her to sleep. Once asleep, the child will be placed in its bed or on a mat in the open air.

Mary, too, warmly welcomed her son, Jesus, and lived in symbiosis with Him.

#### 4. Mary, the new Eve

Mary's "yes" to the Father's will, her total trust in her Son makes her the "mother of all living beings". For a black-African, the heart of communion is the bond of blood. He or she feels united in a special way to all those who, closely or at a distance, hail from the same blood: father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin... and is called to participate in the joys and sufferings of each member of the family. Almost always, family ties have the priority over ties of friendship.

Mary, present at the foot of the Cross, is consecrated Mother of humanity. She is received by the believers who are the true relatives of Jesus. For us, black-Africans, to believe in Jesus means to receive the Virgin Mary, to give ourselves to her in order to discover Him and follow Him better.

#### 5. Personal meditation

Mary, Mother of God, Mother of humanity,  
you who know your Son, you who have followed Him  
and have shared His joys and His sorrows,  
you who are Virgin,  
take me as I am.

Lead me to your Son so that I may understand  
that I am the weak reflections  
of His tenderness in this world,  
so that I may live in communion with  
my brothers and sisters in Christ,  
so that I may preach to the children,  
that God has given them His glorious name.  
Mary, take me as I am and  
lead me to your Son.

Tasinda Pagu Malumba

## OUR BELOVED PATRONESS ("NUESTRA PATRONCITA")

Mary in the Tepeyac, is for us a clear sign that God favors the poorest. She is a bond of Mexican and Latin American fellowship, an affectionate and beloved mother who listens to us, who consoles us, who protects us, who takes care of us, who gives us courage, and who sends us, while she herself has been suffering during these five centuries the pangs of the birth of a renewed Latin America.

She is our beloved patroness, our little patroness, not our boss or mistress, since boss or mistress mean those who give orders on the job, those who hire the workers. She is our beloved patroness, spoken with all possible tenderness, using a diminutive that is so much ours, so Latin American, so Mexican: "nuestra patroncita", Mary in the Tepeyac.

If we have ever been to the Guadalupe Basilica, it may help us to form a picture of our people offering themselves to God and God giving Himself to his people. All this is symbolised by the figure of the virgin of Guadalupe. Or to remember the presence of this same image in nearly every Mexican house, in the factories, on the streets, in the city and suburban buses, in the taxis, everywhere... in little chapels, in the country houses, in tombs, tells us how beloved is our little patroness (patroncita) by everybody.

Or imagine too, if this helps us more, the story that has been handed down to us by Guadalupean tradition, about the Indio Juan Diego. Imagine the several phases of his meeting with Mary; the situation of the Indio ten years after the fall of Mexico city in 1531, when the idols were beheaded, the temples razed to the ground, his culture destroyed and his women raped... as a native poem says: "our heritage is a network of empty holes, everything has collapsed, we have been totally destroyed". Destroyed, perhaps, like the Jews were, in Babylon. This

was our peoples' situation during those first phases of Latin American history, and in some ways, it is a situation that persists up to today: the humiliated Indio, the mistreated Indio, the Indio scorned right on his own land. Let this image help us to get closer to our beloved patroness and to see in her, first of all, the clear sign of God's predilection for the poor.

Tradition tells us that the virgin of Guadalupe appeared to the poor Indio Juan Diego, and that he came from Guautitlan to Mexico City, to the Tlatelolco convent, built on a thorn-covered hill, a hill where no flowers grew; there was nothing else but rocks, stones, and nopal and maguey cactus. She showed herself outside the city, just as her son died outside the city. Not in a bishop's palace; she didn't appear to Fra Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico, nor to those charged with running the civil government. She appeared to an Indio, to the mistreated, the defeated; and she appeared outside the city, on a hill.

It is a clear sign of God's predilection for the poor. Every word spoken by the virgin Mary is full of sweetness toward Juan Diego, toward all those who are suffering on this earth: "here I am to listen to your cries, to hear your laments". The richest, the proudest, the wisest, perhaps they don't come closer to our mother of Guadalupe to tell her their troubles. But the poor do, because they have no one else to go to weep before, they know no one else to go to be heard, they have only the mother of Guadalupe.

To us, she is as well a bond of Mexican and Latin American fellowship. If there is something that keeps our country united in the midst of so many and so various social conflicts, in the midst of so many and so different cultures, in the midst of so many different ways of living, it is this blessed figure, this, our mother of Tepeyac.

She is a link of Mexican and Latin American fellowship. Let's come to an awareness of our great fatherland: Latin America, of our divided nation,

particularly wounded by a line that separates the world of the rich - the first world - from the world of the humiliated and weak. That same line divides as well our Latin American nations. It is important that we open up our hearts, that we feel the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Guatemala and in El Salvador, that we feel as our own the humiliation of the people of Chile and the expectations of the people of Nicaragua; that we feel as our own the progress - perhaps not always in the right direction - of the Cuban people, our brothers and sisters. And that we feel as well the suffering of our brothers and sisters on the other side of the border, of our fellow Latin Americans in California and in other areas of the United States, doing the most humble jobs. Let us open ourselves to this great fatherland and bring to our hearts this image of the virgin of Guadalupe which is such a bond of fellowship within Mexico and Latin America.

See her just as she herself wished to show herself to us. In the first place, in the already very significant representation of a dark skin. We say: a mestizo woman. Yes, she is a mestizo woman, but 70% or 80% Indio. She is a little Indio woman, perhaps in her there are some features of the white race, but fundamentally she is an Indio woman, dressed in an Indio woman's dress, with Indio ornaments and her image is painted on Indio cloth.

In the second place, we know her by means of the words with which she wished to introduce herself: "our pitying mother", "our affectionate and beloved mother who hears us, who understands us, who helps us, who protects us, who takes care of us, who gives us courage, and who helps us to go ahead".

She sends us, as she did with the poor Indio Juan Diego, to stand in line, to wait for the bishop to deign to receive him, in a place where he was not at his ease, where he was nobody. He told her: "Listen, look for some one who can do it, I am only a poor weak peasant, I am not familiar with those places, if you want to get built what you desire, seek out someone who is 'somebody', who has people and substance behind him". But Mary made Juan Diego

go ahead, she encouraged him again and again, she ordered him: "I ask you to, and I order you: go and present yourself, tell him that I want a church built here for me, that it is my will and that he must obey. It is my will, I am sending you..."

In the same way she is sending us too, we of the Christian Life Community. We are a weak community, just a few members scattered in that sea of people which is our Latin American continent. She is making us go ahead, we who are nothing, who have no one behind us, who do not have high posts. And she is sending us with a very special task, as we have seen so far. But she isn't just sending us, she is helping us, protecting us, encouraging us to turn to her, as to our own pity-filled mothers, and to see her just as she showed herself in Tepeyac, still prey, after five centuries, to the pangs of birth.

The image of the Guadalupe virgin is the image of a small, pregnant Indian woman. From her anatomy this is clear, and her token - a black strip of cloth hanging from her belt - was the one used by pregnant Indian women. Perhaps they used this as a means of protection, to make themselves respected, at least a little, and if not themselves, then at least for the baby they carried in their wombs. Five centuries have passed since America was discovered, and we are about to celebrate the fifth centenary of this meeting between two worlds. After five centuries she is still suffering the pangs of birth of a new Latin America. It is a new world in which all races will come together: the black race, the white race, our native race (probably of Malay origin); a new world in which what is at stake, humanly speaking, is the future of the Christian Community, of the Catholic community. We know very well from statistical data and extrapolations from it, that in the year 2000 it is almost a sure thing that one-half of the Catholic Church will be Latin American. It is a believing people, a people full of faith, that is coming to birth in a new life of fellowship and justice, but at the cost of great pain.

We are the witnesses of these tremendous birth

pangs of our near neighbors in Central America: the sufferings of the people of Nicaragua and El Salvador... And thus, we could go back over the history of our continent as a history of pain and suffering, but in the awareness that it is the history of a pain that forms part of a birth that will bring to light a new world, a new life, which is already announced by the efforts of the Comunidades de base, so abundant in Latin America. In these Communities, the people are nourished with the word of God. In them, the people are beginning to feel a solidarity and beginning to understand their mission as a people, which is, as Mary proclaims it, to send the rich away empty and to fill the hungry with good things. This is a people in which a theology is beginning to come into being. But it is a new way and does not start from the Greek categories of abstract thought that was the substance of theology in the Church for many centuries. This is the birth of Mary of Guadalupe, who is now expecting the birth of a new Latin America, which will be light for many brothers and sisters, for humanity, for the Church and for everyone, just as God wishes it.

We can conclude this moment of prayer and of contemplation of the image of the virgin of Guadalupe with a colloquy, just as St. Ignatius conceived it, and just as it is marvellously exemplified by the tradition of the Virgin in presenting to us the Indio, Juan Diego. Ignatius tells us that a colloquy is had by talking as a friend converses with another friend, setting before that friend the subject and asking and thanking that person in all simplicity. We can try to feel ourselves inspired in this brother of ours, Juan Diego. Tradition tells us that on that day, owing to his uncle's illness, he had avoided meeting Mary, just as perhaps we too have avoided meeting her (perhaps to avoid having to hear her song of the Magnificat?). He had avoided meeting her, and she came to meet him nonetheless (just as she meets us). And he, in perfect simplicity, said to her: "How is it going, how are you, my friend, my little friend, how did you spend the night? Did you rest, are you well? I have something unpleasant to tell you: my uncle doesn't feel well..."

"How did you spend the night?" Perhaps it hasn't occurred to you to speak so simply during a colloquy: heart to heart, just as "a friend talks to another friend".

Thus it is that we can begin our colloquy, our dialogue, telling Mary what a friend tells another friend, what a son tells his mother...

Félix Palencia s.j.

## OUR GUIDE

Mary, the Lord's handmaid and blessed among women, being a simple woman of the people manifests to us the preferences of the Father and invites us to sing together with her the longed for triumph of our God: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry He has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away"

We all need a guide who will teach us how to live. And, insofar as we are members of a Christian Life Community, we need a guide who will help us how to live an authentically Christian life. In Mary we find such a guide.

In her, blessed among all women and handmaid of the Lord, we find this mystery of Easter, of her humbling herself by acknowledging herself as a handmaid. Mary is one among the poor of Israel, of those who have no value, of those who have nothing with which to defend themselves. Mary is one of them. A simple woman of the people, who is blessed among women for keeping strong her faith in the Lord, for her readiness to serve and be a sister to all.

She manifests the preference of the Father who has chosen her - an ordinary woman -, to be the mother of his son. The message is clear, there is no other way of reading the gospel. Whom does the Father prefer, from whom does he ask help? From this humble woman, this working woman, this simple woman.

Mary invites us to sing the triumph of our God with her: "The Magnificat", which isn't any magical formula for getting one of God's gifts, for getting an earthquake to stop shaking or for taking away the pain from a scorpion's sting. The people, in their faith, pray with the words of the Magnificat, joining their voices to Mary's song. Perhaps this people doesn't know the history of the song, but it sings the praises of our God with



profound devotion. It is this God who fills the hungry with abundance and sends the rich away without giving them anything. This is the task we are called upon to carry out in as much as we are a Christian Life Community, this is the task that Jesus has come to carry out in this world. Mary, his mother, realizes this, and acknowledges it in the words that Luke puts into her mouth. The first Christian Community understood it in this way, and so it is expressed in the gospel.

This task is no commitment deriving from some philosophical system, made up by a Mr Karl Marx during the last century. The virgin Mary cannot be suspected of communism just because she sang that canticle; Mary cannot be suspected of preaching the class struggle. Simply, Mary is singing joyfully the triumph of our God, of the God who takes on an engagement with the poor and fills them with abundance, sending the rich away with empty hands. This is what the virgin Mary is praising, what it is that fills her spirit with joy: that God is carrying out his desire.

We must accept the fact that it is just this that is God's design for us and for the whole of mankind. Not because God is annoyed because there exist the rich; and this is an important point which needs clarification. Wealth and poverty may be understood in two very different senses. If we understand by rich just the person who has an abundance of goods, who enjoys the products of nature, then we may say that God wants all of us, his children, to be rich. Suffice it to look at the enormous expanse of the universe: it would not be possible to desire a greater wealth! God has been generous toward us. If we were only to divide up among ourselves all the fish in the sea, we would have enough riches for all to enjoy this and other gifts that God has given us. And this is not to speak of the cultural riches that he has given us his children. God does not want us to be poor, he wants us all to be rich. But there's a second meaning to riches, which is, having more than others, while poverty means having less than others. And it is this that God has a horror of, it is this that God cannot tolerate: that among his children some have all and others have nothing. What God does not

want is that we raise ourselves above others. He wants us to share, like good brothers and sisters, the blessings of nature.

This is why Mary is cheered when she sees that God, through his son Jesus, is about to bring this about: to take away from the rich and to give abundantly to the poor. It is this that fills Mary with joy, and when it happens every Christian, every member of the Christian Life Community, must be happy, and must actively work to bring this about. And if all this sounds like a revolutionary, communist message, a message preaching class struggle, well, it is a pity to interpret it in this way! Since at issue here is nothing else but the word of Jesus, of the Gospel, and it is the virgin Mary's song, the song of our guide.

We hope to learn the lesson that this guide wants to offer us with regard to her son, and how to ask her to help us understand the justice of God, the justice that God wants to bring about on earth, to help us to recognize our brothers and sisters as our equals, to work actively for equality, and very especially for a greater equality in the possession of goods. Without this equality, other equalities are only lies: equality before the law, equality of educational opportunities, and so on, as if it were the same thing to go to school with an empty stomach or a full one; as if it were the same thing to study by candle light when five or six brothers and sisters are sharing the same room, where the mother is cooking dinner at the same time, in contrast to studying in a well-lighted room, air conditioned and with all the comforts. What equality can there be between the children of God if this fundamental equality, economic equality, is lacking?

We hope we can learn from our Lady to be made happy by what makes her happy, to struggle for what she struggles for, to commit ourselves to what she is committed to; or anyhow, not to go on believing in that ideology, in that deception, in which many of us have fallen, of thinking that any change in the so-called

social order - in the social disorder - in which we live is going against God. It would be as if God were happy with this situation that we are living through. Whoever is a father or mother and has three children or more will surely want all his children to be able to enjoy in abundance the fruits of the earth, but he will never be able to tolerate one enjoying them to the disadvantage of his brothers and sisters. And this is, instead, just what we are experiencing every day. We ask the virgin Mary to at least succeed in opening up our understanding to make us aware of the injustices that we are experiencing in this system, that gives more to the rich and takes from the poor, making them even poorer, against what God wants and against what Mary announces in her song, the Magnificat. We ask Mary that we may respect and support any person, any movement, any group, that dreams of and works actively for this, accepting the fact that we, very often, do not do the same. At times other brothers and sisters, perhaps not so well prepared as we ourselves are, perhaps without waving their situation as believers or Christians around like a flag, are making this project of God's much more real for all of humanity.

May all men and women have equal access to the fruits of the earth. May it be that, if someone has more, this be because he or she has more need, is weaker, sick, or old, or a child. And not because the person is stronger and thus has been able to seize more goods. Let us shake off from ourselves this form of repugnance, this instinct that forbids us from getting involved in problems, that keeps us from seeing how the blood of our people is running; just as the blood of the son of God was shed for all of us. Let there be justice in this world, and let God's desires for his children, his plan for equality, for fellowship, be fulfilled. This is what will fill the virgin Mary with joy! Let us ask her to truly be our guide and help us to be disciples who are ready to learn; and not to close ourselves up in the shell of our already-formed mentality, but to open ourselves to learn the lesson that she wants to impart to us.

## HOW THE CLC IN BRAZIL SEE THE VIRGIN MARY TODAY

A member from Rio de Janeiro presents here the results of the work done by seven CLC groups in Brazil. He presents the three main characteristics that both adults and young people from these groups are today conferring on Mary.

This document depended on the participation of various Brazilian CLC groups. First of all, the questions concerning Mary and the items for reflecting on her as well as the basic bibliographical suggestions, proposed by the World Secretariat, were sent to these thirty CLC in Brazil. Each of these communities then reflected on them, and seven of them (1) wrote and sent their contributions. These ideas were all gathered together in this document by a member of one of the Rio de Janeiro CLC, chosen by the Service Council

### SUMMARY OF THE VARIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS

As regards the experiences of faith that lead to a greater consciousness of Mary, the adults noted: the full Spiritual Exercises, retreats with the incarnation as their subject, and the fact that a large number of their prayers were answered. The young people on the other hand referred to the recitation of the rosary and the appearances of Our Lady.

For the adults, Mary is perceived as: a strong Woman, an Ambassador of Heaven, Mother of the Holy One, Mother of our Hope, Mother of Mercy, a Model for service, Help of Christians, Consoler of the afflicted, Queen of Peace, Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Church,

---

(1) 7 communities (4 adult communities and 3 youth). Among the adult communities, one was a working-class community, the others were middle class. All the youth communities were from working class groups.

Servant of the Lord, Refuge of sinners, Mediatrix of graces, Our Lady of Victories (the one who, in the end, will triumph), Body for the Spirit, and the first Christian.

The young see her as: one who liberates, the silent woman who listens to the word, courageous, active, a mirror, an underground river (of grace), faithful, full of grace, our Lady of Consolation, the mother of perseverance, our Lady of Grace, our Lady of Aparecida, Our Lady of Latin America.

Among all the names and qualities attributed to Mary, we believe there are three that express all the others.

Mary is seen, mainly, as Hope, Model, and Helper.

- Mary has lived and experienced hope in depth, during her whole life. Then, after leaving this earth behind, she became our powerful advocate before God and the Mediatrix of His graces.

- In contemplating Mary's life, we feel that she is a sure model of faith and for the ever-greater offering of oneself to God, in a continuing and generous cooperation with God's Providence.

- We are seeking a helper, and, therefore, we have recourse to her, our mother, who is continually seeing to our needs, even to the point of coming back to this earth in her numerous appearances, so as to attract us to her son. Mary is perceived as a fully human figure, mediatrix of life to the extent to which, during her whole existence, she permitted and cooperated with the incarnation. In the same manner, we ourselves are called upon to bring about the incarnation of God in us.

#### MARY, OUR HOPE

Working on this document led all of us to reflect - one more time, and yet more deeply - on what Mary

represents, for us, today. In so far as we are members of the CLC, which is to say, in as much as we are laypeople on permanent mission in this world, we have looked again at this world, which is so disfigured and where it is so hard to find God's design. We have sought out what meaning this virgin, born some 2000 years ago, has for us today when virginity is out of fashion, even considered to be an obstacle to happiness and at times even a source of shame.

What does this figure, by turns attentive and silent, say to us, when we are continually surrounded by noise? We recall the most exasperated noises such as those from transistor radios, from rock festivals, from television sets; or other noises causing even more anguish such as the weeping of children abandoned by their mothers, the moaning of the sick, the whining of beggars requesting alms.

What witness does this servant of God give us, whose life was nothing but service, when human work is often seen today as a necessary evil?

Who is this mother who after loving her Son with a love that cannot be equalled, accepted his going to death for the sins of this world, when nowadays there are so many women who consider pregnancy to be an undesirable consequence of their pleasure, and one of its results which is of so little value that it can be rejected whenever necessary?

Finally, it is in looking at the chaos that has come over our world, in hearing the laments of all wars, and in perceiving how necessary the love of God is, that Mary stands up for us as a great hope. She faced this world of sin at the time of her son's Calvary, and her hope held good, bore fruit, as it was founded in her unshakable faith in the Lord. During her whole earthly life Mary bore witness to the hope of one who knows herself to be beloved of God whose design, nonetheless, is impenetrable. She abandoned herself into His hands, not passively, but with great confidence, even though the events of her life unfolded without much apparent rationality.

How was Mary, in her simplicity, able to understand and accept all these contradictory events, without her faith and her hope being shaken by them? She is for us truly the one who hopes against all hope.

#### MARY, OUR MODEL

In meditating on Mary's life, we see in her our MODEL. First of all, because she received the word of God even before she received Him in her flesh, and she received Him in all faith. The miracle of the incarnation thus took place, and, for the virgin who became the mother of Jesus, there began a union with him that was so intimate that it will last for eternity. This union fills her with love and with grace, and leads her to journey towards Elisabeth. She leaves her home in order to place herself at the service of another, to listen to her neighbour.

Owing to her acquaintance with Jesus she becomes for us the model of the mother who raises her son with all love and in all simplicity, coping with all the difficulties that a mother normally has to deal with. Nonetheless, she raised him not for herself, but for the world, into which he would go to fulfill his mission, accepting whatever its consequences might be. And it is right there, tied to this mission, that Mary is an example of cooperation for us. During Jesus' public life, during His suffering and united with the apostles after the death of her son, she cooperated and undertook to fulfill her mission, thus playing her primordial role of Mother of the Redeemer in giving Christ to all men and women.

#### MARY, OUR HELPER

The testimony of Mary's life helps us in our own pilgrimage on this earth. In every situation, she is for us the clear mirror, a mirror without distortion, in which we can look at ourselves in order to act. We have confidence in her help especially because she was given to us as our mother, at the foot of the cross. The fact that Mary is present, body and soul, in heaven makes her closer to

us, more sensitive to our needs. She is the only one, among all the saints of God, to whom it has been given to come back to exhort, to encourage, and even to implore men and women to conversion. Her appearances in innumerable places are clear signs of the affliction of her heart at seeing our humanity, so separated from God, so sunk in its sins.

We too, here in Brazil, feel that we are the objects of our mother's anxiety, since in our Marian sanctuary of Aparecida, innumerable graces have been showered on us. This sanctuary was built to hold an image of our Lady, one found in the sea by fishermen. At first, they saw in their nets her headless body. Then, the head was fished up. So much grace was given by this image, so many pilgrimages were made to it, that a sanctuary was built for it. The virgin of the image is brownskinned and already Patroness of Brazil, but the black people consider her to be their protectress in a special way. We note here too our lady's appearances at Guadalupe, in Mexico.

We know that the only thing explaining all the virgin's appearances is that she is continuing to fulfil her mission: to lead Christ to men and women and to lead men and women to Christ. The number of conversions and vocations in which she has been the intercessor are innumerable. This is also the reason why we believe more and more that she will triumph over Evil.

## CONCLUSION

In reflecting on Mary's life, we discover that she is fully human, one who has given to God the reply that we all wish to be able to give; a response made "in freedom, in poverty, and in solidarity" (The Grace of Loyola, 86). Yes, by means of her wholly free "fiat", by her total offering of herself to God, in her poverty as a simple creature, Mary becomes a co-worker with God in the work of salvation. We too, to the extent that we give ourselves to him, make possible that ongoing incarnation of God in us, since, "In fulfillment of His promise, God became man, born of Mary, in order to give himself



continuously to all men and women and invites them to give themselves continuously to Him in and with Christ" (GP 1).

So, in as much as we are members of human society, and insofar as we are irremediably tied to human destiny, we are called by God to be "mediators of life" (a speech made by Fr Kolvenbach s.j. to the World Assembly at Loyola) as Mary did, and goes on doing. This call is made by means of the mission that provokes the most generous responses, and it leads us too to take on the greatest responsibilities, and, therefore, to place ourselves once again before Him. Mary agreed to be the mother of the Saviour, and then to be called to be the mother of humanity, and mother of the Church. This continual growth, by means of the dynamics of call-response-abandonment of self, confirms the "magis" that is so characteristic of our Ignatian spirituality.

a CLC member  
Rio de Janeiro

## MARY, QUEEN OF THE APOSTLES

This article, written in the United States, present us the missionary activity of Mary, whom always remained attentive to the needs of her neighbour.

Mary was not sent to preach the good news of her Son's resurrection; yet she is venerated as "Queen of the Apostles"; for she was an example of missionary activity, and she understood the plight of those who needed the good news.

### A. MARY AS AN APOSTLE:

First, Mary understood her "call" from God (Lk.1:26-38). In faith, she knew that she was to perform the duties of a mother; she never wavered in that role. An apostle needs a sense that God has both called and sent him or her to some missionary activity; otherwise, the preaching or service becomes a self-engendered task, and the person burns out.

Second, she "visited" Elizabeth (Lk.1:39-45). She brought Christ to her cousin. So often, the person who is sent brings the news or the teachings of Christ; but, more importantly, that missionary must bring the Christ within him or her. Since "no one gives what he or she doesn't have", an apostle must have a personal union with God through prayer and the sacraments so that this holiness can be accepted by others.

Third, Mary proclaimed the greatness of the Lord and the ability of the Almighty to change unjust structures (Lk.1:45-55). An apostle must be humble; he or she

must recognize that God is the one who changes hearts, confuses the proud, deposes the mighty, lifts up the lowly, feeds the hungry, and is merciful. The apostle may be God's instrument either as the prophet calling people to conversion or as the activist building and planting (Jer.1:10) new and just structures.

Fourth, she gave birth to her first-born Son (Lk.2:7), and she presented him both to the poor (Lk.2:8-18) and to the wise (Mt.2:11). Mary is exercising both the absolute requirement of presenting Christ to all people (Mt. 28:19) and the "preferential option for the poor" (U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy, n. 52 and 85-91). And, in so far as she gave her Son to deliver all who are subject to the law (Gal.4:4), she gave Him both to the oppressed and to the oppressors, both to the sinner and to the saint.

Fifth, Mary sought for her lost twelve-year-old (Lk.2:41-50). It seems as if the last place she looked for Him was the Temple. Apostles need to seek Christ "in ten thousand places... through the features of men's faces". (Cf. G.M. Hopkins, "As kingfishers catch fire..."). This seeking of Christ is in the marketplace and in the home as well as in the sanctuary.

Sixth, she "lobbied" for some friends at a wedding feast (Jn.2:1-11). Apostles today may not have the means to feed, clothe, or shelter the needy throughout the world; so, the joining with agencies which attend to the poor, educate the young, clean the environment, foster the arts, create jobs, reduce armaments, eliminate prejudices, heal diseases, and choose life is an effective way of performing signs which reveal God's glory and lead people to a God who is concerned for people (Ex.3:7-10; Am.2:6-16; Is.61:1).

Seventh, Mary is praised as the first disciple (Lk.8:19-21; 11:27-28). To avoid sounding hollow, the one who is missioned must continue to hear the word of God and

continue to act on it; the apostle must set a pattern or example for those who hear what he or she preaches.

Eight, she suffered as she met her Son on His death march (Fourth Station of the Cross) and as she watched Him die as a convicted felon (Jn.19:25-27). Suffering and persecution are the lot of the disciple (Mk.8:34-38; 10:30; Jn.16:1-4). But suffering love can be redemptive (Col.1:24); the willingness to accept suffering rather than repay violence for violence can bring others to repentance and holiness (Rom.12:16-21; I Cor.6:1-9; Mt.5:38-48).

Ninth, Mary implored the Spirit for the apostles and kept a fledgling community of disciples together (Acts 1:14). Apostles must pray for the people to whom they bring the Word of God; and they must also form them into a community of Jesus' disciples so that the hearers of the Word, will, in turn, send forth others to carry on the work of evangelization.

#### B. MARY UNDERSTANDS THE PLIGHT OF THE POOR

Apostles must not only have the skills to proclaim the word of God by word and deed. They must know the cultural situation of the people for whom they are heralds, servants, and community builders.

Mary counts herself among the poor who can only give the little they have (Lk.2:24). As a refugee, she can sympathize both with our previous generation who came to the united states from Europe and with our contemporaries from Puerto Rico, Southeast Asia, and Latin America (Mt.2:13-15). She understands how God's faithfulness and mercy are shown when people enjoy just structures in society (Lk. 1:46-55).



## MARY, THE MODEL OF OUR MISSION

This text reflects the exchange of views that took place between the members of the Gesu CLC in Montreal, Canada. It presents five attitudes of Our Lady that are touching them more and more while they walk the path of our faith.

Mary is well known as Mother, protectress, advocate, servant of God, guide to the Father, but she is in the very first place a dynamic model to follow.

Vatican Council II says of Mary that she is the mother of the Church and that she is "the mother of that maternal love that must animate all those that, associated with the Church's apostolic mission, are cooperating in the regeneration of humanity".

In order to be animated by that maternal love, it appears necessary to know some of the attitudes that Mary cultivated during her life. But before undertaking this study, it will be best to note this: Mary is a human being like us, except with regard to sin. She tried to live her faith in God and to accomplish the mission that he gave her, despite the highs and lows of her daily life. Not everything went smoothly for her.

Here then are five of Mary's attitudes, which keep growing in meaning:

### I - Unconditional acceptance of God's will

In Luke 1,26-38, Mary accepts in faith the mission that the Lord gives her. This acceptance is synonymous with gift, and one who says "gift" says "freedom".

This freedom presupposes a spiritual poverty characterized by humility and by total readiness to go with God. Mary lives this, and this leads her to give the

Lord to others who, themselves, are accepting God in a life of spiritual poverty (Lk 2,15b-18; Mt 2,1-12).

Even if, at the time of her fiat she wonders how that acceptance of God will come about within her life, she remains faithful to the Spirit, an attitude that she will keep throughout her life. Thus, the mystery that is being lived within her and by means of her is unfolding in rhythm with the Spirit. She faithfully keeps all things in her heart (Lk 2,19. 51)

Mary's fiat is comparable to the first time of election in the Spiritual Exercises; on the other hand, her whole journey is similar to the unfolding of the Exercises.

## II - The strengthening of her faith in the Lord

Mary shares her experience of the Lord with a restricted number of persons with whom she feels an affinity on the level of faith (Lk 1,39-54; Mt 1,18-19). Her faith leads her to live through a situation in which she is set aside by the society of her times (Lk 2,4-7).

But persons and events reveal to her that she is called upon to live an extraordinary life (Lk 1,33-38; Mt 2,13-18); something which is not slow in coming. In fact, she has to save herself and hide for a period of time, in order to protect the treasure that God has entrusted to her.

## III - Deepening of her relationship with the Lord

When the tempest brought about by Herod has calmed, Mary comes back to her own (Mt 2,19-23; Lk 2,39-40). She is deepening more and more her relationship with the Lord and her sense of mission. She is living a hidden life, on the level of faith. She does not hesitate to clearly show her distress when she is separated from Jesus; she then undertakes an active search and finds him;

he is involved in the business of his Father (Lk 2,41-50). She understands that in doing his will, she will never grow distant from him.

#### IV - Taking a clear and public position for Jesus

Doing his will is not just listening to him in private life, but it is also clearly taking a stand for him, and therefore trusting fully in him. This is what Mary does in John 2,1-12. She begins her public life at the same time as Jesus does.

Afterward, she follows him in silence, letting him act both in others and in her self. Her faith in the Lord leads her to live with an openness to the mentalities and the attitudes of her time.

#### V - Acceptance of definitive responsibilities on behalf of her faith in the Lord

Mary is so associated with Christ, during her whole life, that her personal relationship with him is transformed. In fact, her public life undergoes a change when the Christ specifically sends her to go out among others (John 19, 25-27; Acts 1,12-14).

#### Conclusions

During her whole life Mary saw her motherhood prolonged past Jesus' birth by her constant attitudes of service. She let Jesus go out to others and thus it is that he became the Christ, and she, the mother of the faithful. After being an agent of life, Mary receives the reward that comes to the useless servant (Mt 25,21).

Finally, let me ask myself which of Mary's attitudes I have developed to date in my life of faith in Christ, knowing very well as I do that the ever deepening nature of the Exercises is present also in the attitudes described above.

Serge Legault



## DEVOTION TO MARY

In this article, the members of the "Immaculate Conception" CLC of Montreal, Canada, tell us to what extent their devotion to Mary has taken a new meaning, in a two-fold approach of prayer and action

Before attempting to describe our community experience, we thought it apropos to cast a look backward to its origins and development, back to the culminating point of the day of our permanent commitment to the World Christian Life Community.

From the time of our infancy, in the heart of our family and then in elementary school, Mary was always presented to us, little by little, as a good mother, the one who protect us and could answer all our prayers. Of course, this devotion of our first years was rather marked with self-interest, often sentimental, tied for example to having heard a beautiful hymn. At times, it was even mingled with a little superstition: it was serious, almost a sin, to fail to fulfill a promise made to obtain a favour! How often has "Good and holy virgin, help me!" sprung from our lips. Despite our numerous failures, we never lost hope that we could please her, since we were certain that she, being the one who understands everything and loves us without reservation, would never let us be stopped by our stupidity.

However, little by little, Mary is taking a more important place in our lives. She inspires us, guides us step by step to that commitment that will join us together before her son. It is the "tender trap" as the English say, of her love for us, of her ardent desire to see us advance along the way of perfection. It was necessary for her to wait for the end of our hesitations, of our reticences vis-à-vis the requirements of such a commitment. And, finally, here we are, members of the CLC! In becoming members of it, we had the impression that we were sacrific-

icing much, of giving much, whereas, in fact, we were receiving graces and privileges through Mary.

Having become adults within the community, Mary has us understand the true meaning of our devotion to her and the true requirements of our commitment. By means of Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, she invites us to deepen the meaning of her "yes" to God's plan and she presses us to make of our lives a "yes" to our mission.

Here then is how, after reflection and exchanges of views, the members of our community described their devotion to Mary, in its double dimension of prayer and of action:

### I - Prayer

- a) prayer of acknowledgment of Mary as Mother of the Redeemer, and mother of the Church, for all the graces she has showered on us during our whole existence;
- b) prayer of supplication to the person who can obtain so many graces for us;
  - the graces of light, of discernment, of faith, of courage, of strength, of obedience, and of love, to enable us to carry out the mission which is ahead of us;
  - the graces of serenity, of interior calm, of exterior calm in our relations with others;
  - the graces of comprehension and of tolerance vis-à-vis persons of other races and other faiths and moral systems;
  - the grace of doing God's will in every circumstance;
  - the grace of fidelity to our commitments, to the directives of the Church, and particularly those which are contested or ill-received by many Catholics;

the grace of readiness to hear the appeal to surpass or to forget the self, that the Spirit addresses to us.

## II. Action

- a) A more intensive study of all the aspects of Mary's life, in particular: her obedience to God's appeal; her faith and her courage in the midst of everyday difficulties; her anguish when faced by her son's sufferings; her acceptance of her son's fate; her attitude before the ingratitude and the cowardliness of the apostles during the passion, and before much cruel behaviour; her acceptance of the role of mother of the Church that Jesus confers on her. A study as well of Mary's different interventions in our history, and of her appearances and messages as recognized by the Church.
- b) A sustained effort with a view to imitating our Lady in living our "yes", not just for our own individual good, but for the good of the Universal Church.
- c) A common project: knitting for the Third World; this is a humble task, of the sort that might have occupied Mary's time.
- d) Individual aid of every kind given to relatives, to friends, or to strangers, in union with the virgin of the visitation.
- e) Taking continual care to profit from occasions given us to get to know Mary better.

Beyond these more rational, more reflected practices, our devotion to Mary must always keep - and it is good to underscore this - its spontaneous reflexes, similar to those of our childhood. Like the great big children that we have stayed, we are to go on confiding to our mother our cowardliness and laxities before the irritating and boring obligations of every day, our failures, our anxieties, our antipathies... We ask God's

consolations through her, and her intervention in the solution of our little problems. We express to her our disappointment at not always being understood or heard. Being fully human, except as regards sin, Mary understands us, and we can instinctively count on her understanding and her sensitive attention to our needs.

This is how we hope to be able to give to Mary the honour that is due her and to bring ourselves nearer, day by day, to the ideal that we have taken in our CLC vocation.

Madeleine Laberge

## SCRAPS OF MYSTERY

In this article, a member of the CLC of Poland, by sharing her closeness to the Virgin, offers a real help to many of us who probably are finding it difficult to have a personal relationship with Mary.

It is often said that present day Christians have many difficulties in finding a personal relationship with Mary. They reject many old forms of devotion to her; on the other hand, while confirming the authenticity of their own faith, they find it difficult to create any new forms of devotion resulting from their mentality and experience.

The easiest way is to simply forget her, if not officially then at least in one's prayer and inner life. But the easiest ways are rarely true. So perhaps it is a worthwhile effort to look for those forms which reflect new experiences. I believe that once you have really seen Mary, you cannot simply forget her or consider her unnecessary in your faith.

Where shall we look? We can find a piece of advice in the Gospel (Mt 13, 52). So the first thing we shall do is to take one more look at the scorned old forms. They contain the spiritual experience of many generations. Perhaps they are not outdated, but it is we who are too narrow-minded and lacking in sensitivity to understand them? Perhaps they are like a pearl lying about and coated with dust? You only need to pick it up and clean it and it will shine beyond all your expectations. And the second step - confronting what we know about her from the Gospel and tradition with our personal experience of life. She is a big mystery which we can understand only to some extent. It depends on our sensitiveness and our inner development. It is given to us in small scraps or glimmers which often come our way quite unexpectedly, and then later we begin to realize that it is only a glimmer.

I'd like to share my experience of Mary as a part of the experience of CLC in Poland. To understand it, one must first go back to an old Polish tradition of the cult of Mary; generation after generation have been brought up in it. Today it is often said to be superficial and even magical. But it comes from a pure and fresh source, too.

When I go back to my childhood, I see her as the Mother. My Mother. I could always be sure she understood. She remembered. It was so simple that it is difficult to speak about it. Later I began to look on her more closely. I perceived that motherhood was for her a way of being. She cared for others. She lived with them and for them even if they would not recognize her. From that moment on I wanted to follow her in a like manner.

Her second name is the Immaculate, the favorite name of St Maximilian Maria Kolbe. She is all chastity, light and beauty - combined in a wonderful harmony. She fascinates and charms, when you look into her eyes. You can never forget this experience. It is a strong challenge and a sign of hope. I received this from those traditional forms of prayer, such as the canonical hours, the litany and the Rosary. I owe it to paintings, sculptures, songs and poetry, too. And I shall always defend those old forms, because they have a touch of Infinity, releasing in us most beautiful and gentle feelings and desires, leading to a greater love.

And the third name - the Queen of the world and the Queen of Poland. It is a reference to the social and national dimension. She is a sign of unity that you can experience, for example, during pilgrimages to her shrines - one of the pilgrimage songs says: "We go as birds to their nests to kneel down in silence before you..." She is a sign of hope and victory, too. Not an easy victory, but in the deepest dimension - through conversion, faithfulness, work and suffering. Through the courage to undertake personal and social tasks and challenges.

Connections between these traditions and the spirituality of CLC are clearly seen. It is a good

foundation to understand its essence: personal love and devotion to God in Christ realized through service to people. It can be called motherhood, and it is one of the aspects emphasizing transmission of life. On the other hand, we need her help because we are powerless and we must not forget it. the Immaculate tells us that we must make a choice of what we really want. The Queen wants us to have our choice. There is no other way. The Queen wants us to have our eyes open to the world and its problems, and teaches us the mystery of the third and fourth week of the Spiritual Exercises.

Another new look at Mary is strictly connected with the Spiritual Exercises and CLC. St Ignatius mentions her many times as we can read in the address of Father Kolvenbach at the Loyola Assembly. But we also have an inner need to depend on Her for help in difficult and critical moments because she was the one who best carried out the task we are called to as CLC. It is not just by chance that she has been present in our community prayer and sharing, from the beginning. And it is not by chance that one of our groups is dedicated to her as the Guide of the Way.

There was a moment when I saw her as a woman of flesh and blood, living an ordinary life among people like us. She had to solve the fundamental problems of life that we, too, cope with: how to live, what to attach greatest importance to, and what to perceive as having relative value only. We too have to learn how to choose the criteria, and how to concretely realize our choices in the complex reality outside and inside of us.

What is most important? What was most important in her life? Not self complacency, not an attractive life, not the respect of people, not knowledge, not even human love, she wanted more. She wanted everything. Only God can give everything (cf. John 6: 35b). I think we are unhappy not because we want too much but because we want too little. We are satisfied with obvious and partial solutions, and we are fooling ourselves that we are content and even happy. We built houses of cards, and we

try to live in them and we die in them because we do not have the courage to face the truth. The truth is that it is not enough, that we must look for something more. We are deceived by our illusions. Perhaps it would not be bad to look up at the starry sky above, once in a while! Mary was bold enough to want everything. And when you want everything you must give everything for it. That is just. You can buy a pearl only when you have sold everything you have. She gave herself to God. That is why her "Fiat" rings so naturally and simply. She wanted only what He wanted and this is the key to the harmony and simplicity in her life. She was always present where He needed her. And she never complained. You cannot complain once you have made a decision, even if you do not understand; even if no one understands you.

How did she realize it? I was struck by her humility and poverty. Her everyday life, in which big and little things intermingled, was subordinated to God: her silence, her strength in weakness, her trust, her world as simple as the essentials of life - as water, bread, grass and a tree.

I can identify with one particular scene from the Gospel (Lk 1, 43) perhaps because of my name which means "Visitation". There is a meeting of two women who love God. And they understand each other instantly. They love each other. They help each other. It is a mystery of solidarity. From the moment I experienced it, I have felt that she is not only my Mother, she is my closest friend.

And lastly, one more image. There was a moment in my life when I felt as if I had fallen into a precipice. In my complete darkness, there was only one light I turned all my hope to. It was her. I cannot explain it. Why her? I do not understand it. But it was my real experience.

A CLC member



## IN THE SANCTUARY OF ARANTZAZU

During the last World Assembly at Loyola, Spain, nearly 150 delegates from 50 countries journeyed to the Sanctuary as Ignatius did in his time to place his vocation at the feet of Our Lady. In the eucharist which we celebrated there, the then National CLC assistant of Spain made these reflections in his homily.

In our pilgrimage, we have arrived in Arantzazu. Here again, we return to the theme of our Assembly: Mary, the model of our mission.

### In Mary, everything is a gift of God

Between Mary and us there is an important difference: in Mary there is no sin; in her there is only the grace of God. We are pilgrims who, hurt by sin, have been taken into the house of the Lord. More over, as we live so submerged in sin, it often happens that only within physical and moral suffering we are able to close our eyes to the world and to open them to the Word of the Lord.

But we, too, the same as Mary, have also been chosen; called and sent. From the moment when we listen to the call of the Lord an essential change is produced in our lives and, where sin has abounded grace is over-abundant to such an extent that, from that moment on, the only thing important in our lives is the gift of God which we have received without any merit.

There is sin in us, but the important thing in our lives is not sin, for which everyone is responsible, but rather that for which we are not responsible, that which is given to us: forgiveness, the gratuitous gift of the love of God of which we are recipients and transmitters. In that important aspect, our lives and that of Mary are equal.

In Mary we know that the greatness of our mission lies in the fact that we receive it freely. With Mary, we learn to be poor and how to receive. The great things that God does in us He has already done before in her. "He looked on the humility of His handmaid". Mary is great because everything in her is a gift, a free grace.

Mary is the model for our Community and for the Church

Comparing our community life to the life of Mary, we find again the similarities and differences that we found at the personal level.

The mission of Mary is to make Jesus present in the world. She makes Him present in the Incarnation, she makes Him present throughout her life, and she makes Him present near the cross and, after His death, in the life of the Church.

In our community life not everything is good wheat. Frequently our individual communities are satisfied with their own community life and do not see the need to share that life with other communities, or simply don't have the strength to do so. However, that egoism disappears from us and from our communities when we feel, in the depth of our hearts, the call to serve the Church, in which Christ is present among us.

The Council reminds us that "the Church is the sacrament or sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (Lumen Gentium, 1). When we feel ourselves called and say "yes" to the commitment of belonging to the Christian Life Community, we commit ourselves to an association of faithful which, as the last two World Assemblies have said, is only one community, one world Community, and in that Community the Church is visible growing. This is a responsibility which many of us have already taken upon ourselves and which we must continue to assume.

In the Incarnation, Mary took on the responsibility of a radical commitment with Jesus. And Mary, from the

foot or the cross, is the model of universality in her commitment. Mary is our mother together with and through her total gift of her Son; and her motherhood has no bounds, in just the same way in which the self-giving of her Son has no bounds. At the foot of the cross, Jesus makes Mary our mother and she accompanies us in the work, which is both Jesus' and ours, of making the Church visibly grow.

### Mary is the model of our mission to the world

I have just said, quoting the Council, that the Church is the sacrament or the sign and instrument of the unity of the whole humane race. If we, the Christian Life Community, would form a large World Community, we would do little if this didn't bring with it simultaneously a greater openness of each one of the communities to the surrounding world.

Almost all of us have made, in one way or other, the contemplation of the Incarnation of the Exercises. Making this contemplation we have experienced how Mary is the model of our mission to the whole world. This mission is our collaboration with the active love which the Father of all men and women has for the world in His Son Jesus Christ. The Christian Life Community can not be a small, closed world within the world.

In the conversation that the ecclesiastical assistants of Europe had last year with Fr Kolvenbach, he told us something that had a special impact on me: "It seems to me that it is here that we find the difference between the CLC and many other movements: that, from my point of view, the CLC has no ideology; to say it this way, they have no preestablished rigid interpretations. As in the Exercises, the group comes together to seek what God wants of us here and now. Therefore, it is open. We must acknowledge that this is what makes the CLC's weak or, if you wish, vulnerable". On different occasions I have reflect on this phrase with other persons and it has almost always produced in us an inner movement. It seems to me that here we are dealing with something very

important. In CLC we have nothing which is our own, in just the same way that Mary has nothing of her own. Mary has no ideology. Mary is pure obedience, pure following of the will of her Lord.

Will we have enough courage to accept and to proclaim that having nothing of our own, identifies the mission of the CLC? Frequently we are fearful that we might water down our identity. It is a temptation. Nevertheless, although we have nothing of our own, our mission is neither abstract nor "spiritualist".

The CLC prepares for its mission through the practice of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, but then this mission is carried out and concretized through the acceptance and the following of the will of the Father, who manifests Himself in Jesus, the Son, present in the Church by the action of the Spirit. We receive our mission through the Church, each of us in a different way according to the way we belong to it.

Fr Javier Leach s. j.

## MARY AND WOMEN

In this difficult time when women are seeking ways of living their femininity with serenity, we see in Mary a person who incarnates several attitudes which are much needed in our society nowadays. She helps us to understand better that men and women, working complementarily, are called together to make our history and our civilization move forward.

One of the characteristic facts of our age is the determined entrance of women into various fields of public life. Their participation on the job, in political and economic life, is taking on the features of a real cultural change. And this change seems to be flowering from the awareness that we have acquired during this century. Many and different paths have been followed to reach this new way of being men and women in the world, where all are responsible for a common future. Anyway, however positive it may all seem, this change has provoked and is still provoking much uneasiness, many questions, and difficult changes of attitude. The change, in women's self consciousness, has been and is going through a hard, slow, and painful birth. A birth, like all births, which gives rise to hurts, but one, if properly followed up, can be a source of new life.

It appears that we women are seeking a way of being women along many different paths, which at times go in opposite directions. The range of positions runs from a conformist respect for tradition, for which the only woman's role would appear to be housewife, one in which working outside the home is seen as a dreaded threat, on through and up to attitudes of violent anti-male belligerence in which the family is almost cancelled out and is relegated to a place where it has almost no importance at all. We can perceive a widely spread insecurity, suffering, difficulty in harmonizing family life with work and the development of our capabilities outside the home. We feel ourselves as women in an almost painful way, in this

complex world full of challenges that we must live in, tugged about and split between our families and our wide-ranging professional contributions to society. We feel disoriented by the many kinds of attitudes that propose new ways of looking at ourselves and of tackling life. We divine a generalized concern to discover new ways of living our femininity which excites us as "good news", good news both for ourselves and for everyone: for the life of the couple, for family life, and for society in general.

I believe that it is only from a more wide-ranging acknowledgment and strengthening of the deep lying vein of humanity enclosed within us, that a better contribution, one that cannot be renounced, can be made by us to society and to the contemporary world. I hope that today's psychology and sociology can help us a lot, each in its own fashion, to solve problems that at times are more apparent than real. I believe it is necessary to look for attitudes that will help us to grow without being broken, that will make us capable of loving with passion, but without reducing us to subordinate positions because of this; attitudes that will lead us to take on conflicts with courage, but without aggressiveness or rancor or hiding ourselves behind defences or proclamations that castrate our sensibilities; attitudes that will make us ever ready to take part in all kinds of social life, but without cutting our family roots; that will lead us to work towards building our world side by side with the contribution of men, without competition, but rather in an attitude of solidarity and of complementarity. Above all, I believe that beyond the very important fields of the social sciences, our Christian faith is the bearer of very profound "good news" for us as women and the contribution that we can make to the world.

Our faith shows us, right from the dawn of humanity, what is the value of being men and women in the world. It shows us the meaning and the profound magic of the human couple and of the family. Furthermore, it teaches us to look at ourselves as persons who are called upon - together - to fulfill an unlimited growth, and it

leaves us as its heritage the immense challenge of incarnating in our lives and in our societies the person who is "in the image and likeness" of God. It is the "image and likeness" of a God who wants to make himself manifest and known historically and bodily in two different but complementary aspects: male and female. Were things not like this, his image would be a mutilated one. Human history then appears as a visualization, as an incarnation, of the infinite facets of the essence of God and of his love for our world. Thus the man and the woman together are "lords" of creation and of history, and can realize within them, however fragmentary, the eternal presence of God.

Our faith teaches us that when the times were ready, at the dawn of the New Covenant, the figure of Mary of Nazareth appeared, she the mother of Jesus and the wife of Joseph the carpenter. She is a figure that, having been proclaimed "full of grace" by the angel, has much to tell us about the way of being woman and the way of being incarnated "in the image and likeness" of our God. If today, after twenty centuries, we make an in-depth analysis of what the gospel tell us about her, we discover that her message is new, and that her way of living is a challenge to all of us. I would like to reflect on a few, eternally feminine, attitudes of this woman whom we believe, as "full of grace", incarnated, as no other woman has, the feminine face of God.

If we read the gospel in search of Mary, we discover that she was a simple down to earth Jewish woman of her time and culture. She lived in a small mountain village, whose horizons were limited, in a nation that was of scant importance during that age. She lived just like any other Israelite woman, within a frame of reference of relatively unchanging customs, fulfilling faithfully what she believed to be good and suitable for her as a woman. Thus, she was betrothed to Joseph, the carpenter (Lk 2,27 and Mt 1,18). This, certainly, fulfilled all the aspirations of her feminine loving heart.

If we attentively observe what it is that solidly ties her to the people of Israel and its customs, and what

it is that, at the same time, opens up her interior world to every thing that is unusual and unpredictable in the future, it is her faith. She firmly believes in the God of the covenant, who communicates with his people and engages with them to give them life, history and fullness.

This is why she is attentive to hear what God wants and can communicate to her. She has faith that everything that comes from God is life, growth, openness to the future in continuity with her roots. She can in this way be open to "the new". She can, therefore, listen, discern, and receive requests that burst open the plans of her life (Lk 1. 26-38). In this listening attitude of hers, she feels herself called to undertake an inconceivable task: to be the virgin mother of the son of God! Acceptance involves risks which she knows and discerns. And she risks, in order to be faithful to the appeal of Him who calls light from darkness, the cosmos from chaos, life from nothing, total freedom which is open to the future, from imprisonment. Therefore, she is not afraid to risk everything that humanly speaking makes her life secure: her honor and her future marriage. She accepts her God's call and his promise, and places all the problems that this acceptance may create for her into the hands of Him who can do everything, and whose name is holy.

This makes her free. She is free to go on listening and discerning, and receiving the invitations of her God in the daily unfolding of her life. God's invitations call her to grow more and more in love for Him and for his people; that lead her to use all that she is as a woman for the service of her people, with the total forgetting of her own human needs for security; it calls her to incarnate in her feminine way, the love of God.

Profoundly rooted as she is in the customs and traditions of her people, she rigorously observes the feast days and rites that her faith imposes (Lk 2, 21-24 and 39-42). She thus leads an intense life of communication with her God. This makes her capable of listening to and discerning more deeply the life going on around her. She observes and safeguards in her heart all the events



that she happens to experience. During her whole life long she appears attentive to the historical development of her people their future. She listens to what the poorest and most despised say, and she gives to this an importance which she would give to a message from her God. Thus it is that she ponders these things in her heart (Lk 2,15-19). She listens to what the aged say, she is attentive to the voice of lived experience (Lk 2,29-38), because she divines that the history of salvation is becoming manifest in day to day life, where God's call and our's responses are woven and tied together, thus building the future. She is a woman near to her people's life and pain. Her people's clamor in their search for righteousness and freedom do not leave her indifferent, but rather impel her to a limitless dedication (Lk 1,46-56).

She agrees that in her own life, as in the life of her son, something unique and unrepeatable for everyone is at stake (Lk 2,33-35), something that will be painful for her, that will be a sign of contradiction and a scandal, that will push many towards a fall, which will be the seed of salvation. She listens, she understands that at issue is the loving and unpredictable will of her God. She accepts it and ponders it in her heart. This treasuring and pondering is a way of remembering in a loving manner everything that she has heard and experienced in order to understand it better, make it part of her life and go on responding to it in a vital fashion. And this vital fashion of living keeps her ready and alert to the needs of the people who surround her, however low and material their needs might seem to be (John 2,1-5). Everything that appears as a problem in the hearts of those who are near to her echoes as an urgent call in her own, and after she has identified it and made it her own, she presents it to the one who can transform it (John 1,1-12).

Her way of listening, of receiving and discerning life, her courage in taking the steps necessary to achieve something, her creative way of acting and using signs and words for promoting new initiatives in the daily moments, in all simplicity, all these lead us to see that Mary is realizing in an ever new way and - should I say - an

eternal way of being a woman and of reflecting in a feminine way the "image and likeness" of God. Mary incarnates the woman's attitudes of which our society has great need today, whether in the family, in working life or in social, political and economic life:

- to be attentive and to listen...to listen to what the life around us is telling us, whether it be family life or life within society in its broadest meaning;
- to be attentive in a most special and preferential way, to the needs of the weakest among us, of those living on society's margins, the despised and scorned, those who need every thing and who have almost no voice at all to make themselves heard;
- to be ready to go through life caring for the needs of all those around us, both our families and neighbours and others in need who ask to be taken into consideration and who invoke a more receptive, participative and human society, especially in matters of freedom and justice;

to be, in every sphere of life, ready to receive the deepest desires for life that our God infuses in us abundantly, in ways that are ever new within these upsetting times of ours;

- to receive within our hearts what we have heard, seen and experienced, to remember it, to give ourselves the time to feel it so as to be able to identify where life's forces are to be found, where the generosity and creativity hidden in every relationship may be found, in each and every moment of life;
- to take passionately as our own, everything we discover that can promote life and make it grow. Only in those relationships and commitments can we leave a trace where we can devote ourselves whole heartedly and establish lasting ties;
- to have the courage to take the steps necessary to be

faithful to the incarnation and to the growth of life. For this it is important to have recourse to the imagination of love which inspires in us real gestures and signs which will renew our way of looking at reality. Thus we will contribute to incarnating and making effective the changes that this life calls forth from us. Even if this means risks and being exposed to the dangers that arise out of breaking up inhuman social structures.

In this profoundly feminine tendency to remember, to keep at the level of heart, persons known and events experienced in order to go deeper into them, to love them and to make of them flesh of one's own flesh, we discover a permanent woman's vocation to be humanity's memory. For centuries she has been the main one who has kept in her heart and transmitted to her children by words of course, but more by gestures and attitudes, all the accumulated traditions and wisdom. It has been woman - and it is indispensable that it go on being her - who has watched over faith in life, the true root that nourishes every society; she has taken care that these roots be set warmly and solidly so that future generations can open themselves up with confidence to new things in the future, without losing their identity or destroying themselves.

To have the courage to take the steps necessary to be faithful to the incarnation and growth of life in its multiple manifestations, sheds light on another aspect of woman's fundamental vocation: her vocation to conceive the future, to create concrete and fresh signs that express new life and help it to grow, gestures and attitudes that promote changes in society. But, they are changes that are rooted in the celebration of life, in faith, in the creative force of love, changes that are always open to the future.

If we Christian women, illuminated by Mary's example, live our faith in depth, live it out of its solid historical roots, we shall not be frightened when faced by the challenges that history poses to us today nor by the changes that it calls upon us to make. We shall not

let ourselves be bewitched by radical positions or ideologies that could break us into pieces. We shall better understand that it is our God who, in history, is continually challenging us to breakup the plans behind which our experiences become rigidly set, behind which we hide so as not to grow.

It is the same Lord of history whom we have known in action and in his creation of the marvels of the past (which we must not forget), who calls us and challenges us to be free and to work with him, in the construction of a more fully human future, in which men and women will contribute - each in their own way, and as complementary to each other - their capacities to move our civilization and our history ahead. Then we shall be, more joyfully and creatively, the "image and likeness" of God for our world.

Josefina Errázuriz

## APPENDIX

### OUR LADY IN THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS

Talk given by Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach s.j.  
to the participants of the VIII Ignatian Course  
organized in Rome, 1985, by the Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis (CIS).

The text of this talk was first published by CIS  
in "Some Theological Aspects of Ignatian Spirituality",  
(book, 111 pg., available in three languages at CIS,  
C.P. 6139 - 00195 ROMA - ITALIA)

## OUR LADY IN THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST IGNATIUS

Talk addressed by Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach s.j.,  
on February 1st., 1985, to the participants of the  
VIII Ignatian Course organized in Rome by the  
Ignatian Centre of Spirituality.

This modest contribution by one who is not a specialist in Ignatian Spirituality, coming as it does at the close of that part of the Ignatian Course that deals with the Bible and the Exercises, intends very simply to evoke the presence of a figure eminently and thoroughly biblical -Mary of Nazareth- at the very heart of the Spiritual Exercises of Master Ignatius.

Is it all necessary to recall this presence? Is it not self-evident? Frankly, not seldom does one come across excellent commentaries on the Exercise today with no reference whatever to Our Lady, or at best a quick mention in passing. How are we to explain this phenomenon?

First of all, it is so attractive for the mind to study the Spiritual Exercises as a systematic and progressive pedagogy leading to the fullness of personal freedom or to the total formation of man that the role of Christ as Mediator, and consequently of Mary as Mediatrix, is easily obscured.

Then again, it is tempting to set aside the sequence of the "mysteries of Christ" as found in the Spiritual Exercises to replace it, thanks to the findings of modern exegesis, with the path followed by the disciples in their discovery of the mystery of Christ, -moving, that is, from the paschal mystery to the Lord's baptism, and from the Lord's baptism to the infancy gospel. Thus reversing the path traced out by the itinerary of the Spiritual Exercises, the contemplation of the incarnation, so that the delicate narrative section concerning the Child Jesus with his Mother, so much insisted on by Ignatius, is relegated to the museum of Christian piety.

Finally it is enticing with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin - even though the name of Mary figures practically in every one of his retreats - to push back into the shadows, or be completely oblivious of, the "little" history of Mary in order to develop at length, beyond all personalization, the "great" idea of the "mystery of the Feminine" symbolized by Our Lady in her association with the "cosmic Christ".

True, we can no longer describe the Virgin Mary as Fr M. Meschler could still do in his day in his commentary on the Spiritual Exercises and their meditations: "When Mary lifts the corner of her veil, we see her beautiful oval face, of a pure colour, slightly pale, with big blue eyes and pink perfectly shaped lips, giving to her mouth an expression of ineffable tenderness and kindness. The Holy Virgin has flowing hair, bright blond hair, falling on her shoulders" (p.371. French edition, Paris, 1913). But, after all, would not the pilgrim Ignatius, who gladly gave free rein to his great devotion to Mary - Mary, so deeply loved in Spain and venerated at all the shrines that dotted his pilgrimage -, would he not feel more at ease with Meschler's commentary on his Exercises than with the learned ones of our days? He well might. But if Fr Hugo Rahner had already remarked how Ignatius in the course of the Exercises strikes a balance between the appearances and the absences of Our Lady with a certain exquisite dogmatic tact, Fr Peter Schineller for his part is convinced that Ignatius would have availed himself of "the views and insights of modern biblical scholarship and systematic theology" had this been within his power.

Basing himself on the text of the Spiritual Exercises, the reader will not fail to notice the constant presence of Our Lady, signified either by her titles or by her name: 27 times the title "Our Lady", 13 times the designation of "Mother", 5 times the name "Mary" and once each "Virgin" and "Handmaid of the Lord". More important than this is the distribution of these titles and this name over two very different kinds or categories of texts. First set forth in 1954 by Fr Maurice Giuliani in a

classical article entitled "Le mystère de Notre Dame dans les Exercices" (Christus, n.3, 1954, pp.32-49), this division has been partially taken up very recently by Fr La Fontaine in the review Manresa (vol.56, n.220, pp.205-217). Linguistic will readily designate these two categories of texts as narrative and functional. The narrative texts would be those that make us contemplate Mary's part in the actual unfolding of the history of salvation; the functional texts would be those that make Mary take an active part in the new history that the Exercises set in motion between the Divine Majesty and the retreatant. The very existence of such a division makes it clear that Mary is not only an object of contemplation, but an agent within the contemplation itself

The analysis of the narrative texts should evoke for us that type of icon of the Virgin that Ignatius depicts through his particular handling of the biblical material. The Retreat Master is to "narrate accurately the facts of the contemplation or meditation", so that the retreatant can "take the solid foundation of facts", as the second annotation prescribes (SE.2). But, that the retreatant may arrive at a "better understanding (or, experience - 'sentir') of the facts" (SE.2), the Spiritual Exercises present a mode of reading or interpretation of the biblical material which leads to what I have called Ignatius's icon of "Our Lady". Which are these hermeneutical approaches?

At first interpretation key, semantic in character, is provided by the predominant use of the title "Our Lady". As such, this designation has nothing extraordinary about it. Spain being the Marian fief it was, the expression was commonly in use to honour the Lady for excellence. However, within the Exercises this title appears to compete with two other designations: "Mother" and "Mary". The name "Mary" is not just freely used: it is connected with biblical quotation (4 times: SE.262, 263, 264, 265), with the beginning of the prayer "Hail Mary" (9 times) and with the expression "the Virgin Mary", used only once in the Spiritual Exercises (SE.299).



Neither is the word "Mother" employed haphazardly. Its use is not only linked to commonly current expressions such as "the Child and his Mother" (SE.266, 269, 270) or "the Mother and the Son" (SE.199, 276); but it is strictly connected with a selective usage of possessive adjectives. Ordinarily there is question of "His Mother" (SE.135, 219, 266, 269, 270, 273, 297, 298), only once of "your Mother" (SE.98). The use of "our Mother" refers exclusively to the Church (SE.353, 363, 365; cf 170). If the possessives in the singular show Our Lady as closely associate with her Son and the possessive in the plural indicates the Church, the absence of any possessive places her as Mother between her Son and "us". Beneath the cross "his Mother" becomes "the Mother", as Ignatius notes with amazing precision (SE.297). It is the same at Cana: "The Mother draws the attention of the Son" to our needs (SE.276). Hence the use of "the Mother" twice when suggesting the colloquies: "He may used three colloquies: one with the Mother, one with the Son, and one with the Father" (SE.199); again, the colloquies proposed at the end of the contemplation of the incarnation suggest the following equation: "The Mother", namely "Our Lady" (SE.109). The refusal to use the expression "our Mother" to designate Mary underlines the primacy of her divine motherhood - "your Mother", "his Mother" - which cannot be put on the same level as a very real yet spiritual motherhood - "the Mother" - in regard to us. The familiarity implied in the term "our Mother" yields to the transcendence of the mystery of the "Theotokos". The refusal to call her "our Mother" fits in most naturally with that "all possible homage and reverence "with which the mystery of the Nativity is to be contemplated (SE.114). Fr Charles O'Neill has already called attention to the deep meaning of the term "acatamiento" or "homage". Writing in Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits of January 1976, he remarks: "In Ignatius acatamiento is a happy consciousness of divine presence, an awe suffused with warm attractiveness and resulting in love" (p.3). The use of the word "Mother", therefore, seems to be governed by that "greater reverence" which Ignatius says is required when "we address God our Lord or his saints" (SE.3).

The usage of the title "Our Lady" dominant in the Exercises and free of other qualifications, corresponds to the attitude of reverence inspired by the mystery of the Theotokos. It suffices to compare the Autograph text with that of the Vulgate to realize that, but for some five exceptions - if the count is correct - the Vulgate replaces the Autograph's "nuestra Señora" with "Virgin Mary", or "Mary", or "holy Mother". This adaptation - for it is not really a translation - alters the perspective altogether. The Vulgate creates an atmosphere of intimacy changing "to see the house and room of Our Lady" into "the little house of the Virgin Mary" (SE.103). The annunciation of "the conception of the Divine Word" to "the blessed Virgin", as the Vulgate puts it, has different connotations from the Autograph text's annunciation of "the conception of Christ Our Lord (nuestro Señor)" to "Our Lady" ("nuestra Señora") (SE.262). The same holds true of the first apparition of the Risen Lord. The Autograph text's lapidary "Our Lord" appearing to "Our Lady" becomes in the Vulgate "the Lord Jesus appeared to his holy Mother", thus breaking up the close association of Christ and Mary in the work of our salvation (SE.218). It is significant that in order to elicit "greater reverence" in the contemplation of the Nativity, the Vulgate re-inforces its usual substitute for the Autograph's "Our Lady", viz. "the Virgin", by adding "Mother of God" (SE.114). The figure of the Virgin Mary such as it emerges from the Vulgate, remains basically very biographical by its use of the name of Mary apart from biblical quotations; it also remains very elementary - a mystery that barely begins to open out - by its use of the title Virgin, which the Autograph text avoids, except one. On the contrary, the figure of the Virgin Mary evoked by discerning use of Marian titles in the Autograph is that of the one uniquely associated ("Our Lord", "Our Lady") in the work of our salvation; and Ignatius contemplates this work of our salvation in its fulfilment - that is, in the perfect creature Mary/ Our Lady - while he prays for the grace of being associated with this plan of salvation for the aid and perfection of "souls". The accomplishment of grace has been realized not only in the Son of the Father coming from on high, but also in a

daughter by the name of Mary, who comes like us "from below". It is not only "Our Lord" but also Mary that has entered forever "into the glory of my Father". The pilgrim, who together with "Our Lord" sets out on his journey towards "Glory" makes his commitment through the Kingdom oblation "in the presence of your glorious Mother" (SE.98); in her the pilgrim or companion can contemplate that accomplishment of the work of our salvation which every Christian hopes for by God's grace in his own life as pilgrim. From the start the creature Mary is not just a character whose doings are recalled by the retreatant as belonging to a dead and buried past; rather, she is "Our Lady", the creature perfected by grace, and as such she who remains for us an ever actual "today". It is in this "eternal now" that Ignatius makes us contemplate the mystery of "Our Lord, who has just become man for me" - "ansi nuevamente encarnado" and "Our Lady" who for ever humbles herself and offers thanks to the Divine Majesty" (SE.108).

A second interpretation key completes the Ignatian icon of "Our Lady". At least during the second week, Ignatius makes it a point to bring together certain mysteries that emphasize those features of a "glorious Mother" (SE.98) which bear the marks of a "sorrowful Mother" (SE.298), just as her Son, the Risen Lord, bears the wounds of his Passion even in his "Glory" today. There is a stark contrast between the richness of the trinitarian plan contemplated in the Incarnation (SE.101--109) and the "extreme poverty" of the Birth of the Lord (SE.110-117). Ignoring, it would seem, both Luke's perspectives and Matthew's orientation, Ignatius offers for the second day of the second week a description of the presentation in the temple that breathes life, peace and salvation (SE.268 a, b,c), to contrast in then with a picture of the flight into Egypt which clearly spells death, escape and exile (SE.269 a,b,c). The contrast is carried over to the third day, when "Our Lady" experiences both the obedience (SE.271) and the disobedience (SE.272) of her Son both the peaceful atmosphere of a family life of work (SE.271) and the rupture caused by the work for the Kingdom (SE.272).

It is this alternation of suffering and joy - the paschal journey of the Kingdom (SE.95) - that in the dialectics of the Spiritual Exercises calls for the apparition of the Risen Lord "to his blessed Mother" (SE.219) after all her experience as a "sorrowful Mother" (SE.298). All through this alternation the sorrowful Mother remains inseparably associated with the passion of her Son. Ignatius explicitly highlights her "compassion because of the blood her Son shed" (SE.266) at the circumcision. However, though deeply devoted to the Mother of Sorrows (so say the historians), Ignatius does not impose this devotion of his in the Exercises. He offers no meditation on Mary's personal and interior suffering: no mention of the sword that will pierce her heart, or of the doubts and misunderstandings; indeed, nothing at all of her suffering at the foot of the cross. Her sufferings are invariably associated with those of her Son: "He was taken down from the cross... in the presence of his sorrowful Mother" (SE.298). Her sufferings are unfailingly placed with the context of the glory of her Son, as in the case of that "farewell to his blessed Mother" (SE.273) that issues in the manifestation of his true sonship at the baptism: "This is my beloved son" (SE.273). The very same house - which Ignatius saw with his own eyes in Jerusalem, if we are to believe the pilgrim guides of that era - witness "the solitude of Our Lady, her great sorrow and weariness" when she "retired" to it "after the burial of her Son" (SE.208 f and e) as well as her "intense gladness and joy because of the great joy and glory" of the Risen Lord when he visited "the house of Our Lady" in his role as Consoler (SE.219, 220, 221 and 224). Most closely associated with the paschal mystery of her Son, Our Lady lives in the actual now of fulfilment the Glory resulting from her sufferings. The icon of Our Lady depicted by Ignatius sums up perfectly the basic features that the Spiritual Exercises aim at forming in the retreatant, namely the features of the Kingdom.

Yet another Key of interpretation allows us to penetrate even deeper into the mystery of Mary as sketched by Ignatius. The obvious selection of the biblical material in the "points" does not merely set forth the

contemplation of a mystery; it gives it a clear orientation. The "points" constitute a veritable code of interpretation; but it is a delicate matter to read and interpretation into what clearly appears as no haphazard division into "points". At any rate, it leads to not a few surprises, the first of which is certainly the absence of any meditation on the inner feelings of Our Lady, on her interior life. Mary is not the daughter of Sion eagerly awaiting the Saviour; neither is she in adoration before the crib, nor the one who "keeps all these words in her heart"; she is not presented as the model of any particular virtue nor shown in prayer in the midst of the infant Church. All this passed over in silence reduces the story of Mary, such as we have it in the Bible and even more amply in medieval devotion, to the very essentials of her role in the work of our salvation. Such a reduction is particularly noticeable in the "points" for the mystery of the Lords' presentation in the temple. Once the "purification of Our Lady" is announced in the title, the three "points" do not mention her at all. Our Lady disappears behind her ministry of taking Jesus: "They take the Child Jesus to the temple" (SE.268); after that, Simeon and Anna are concerned only with him. Despite the mention of Mary in the Lucan text, Ignatius' "points" compass the "mother" (Lk 2,48) within the ministry of the parents (SE.272); what is highlighted is the true parenthood, that of the Father. A similar absence occurs in the "points" for the mystery of the "Three Kings, the Magi". Matthew mention the Mother; Ignatius does not (SE.267); all attention is focussed on the adoration of the Child and on not returning to Herod. All these traits point to the meaning of true motherhood, which consists in welcoming and accepting the unfathomable designs of the Divine Majesty. Mary is the one who, with her absolutely total and unconditional assent of faith, undertook and fulfilled in her own living her unique mission in the work of our salvation. Or, in Ignatius' own words, "making the journey and labouring that Our Lord might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labours... he might die on the cross, and all this for me" (SE.116). Just as her Son must leave "his Mother according to the flesh to devote himself exclusively to the service of his eternal Father" (SE.135), so too

Our Lady, in her pilgrimage of faith, transcending the mere bonds of flesh and blood, joins herself intimately to her Son's service for the sake of the Kingdom, devoted "exclusively to the service of the eternal Father" (SE.135). It is this "devotion" alone that Our Lady is wholly given to.

No wonder, then, that the Spiritual Exercises go beyond the mere narrative section of texts to focus on Our Lady's action in this experience, thus highlighting an entire functional section of texts. A venerable tradition - though one rather doubtful, "traditio sat incerta", as the Monumenta Ignatiana warns us (v.100, t.I, p.62) - would even have it that Our Lady dictated to Ignatius the Spiritual Exercises from beginning to end. Even though this tradition be nothing more than a pious hyperbole, a symbolic metaphor to emphasize Mary's undeniable mediation in the composition of the Exercises, as supported by the Autobiography (cf nn.28-29), yet the entire functional section of the text of the Exercises demonstrates that Our Lady is taken to be its co-author. Roland Barthes has sought to draw on a literary analysis of the book of the Exercises to discover in it not just a multiple text, but principally the existence of four authors who really make the Exercises. Ignatius relates his own experience, but wants the one for whom he is writing (the retreat director) to have enough freedom to give "his own Exercises". Speaking from long experience Fr François Varillon testifies: "While there is a basis common to all, there is a very personal way of grasping it...; in passing through me (the spirituality of the Exercises) takes on a particular tint. But I must beware lest this tint or hue become so vivid as to be wholly Varillon's and cease to be Ignatius's" (*Beauté du monde et souffrance des hommes*, 1980, p.188). The authority of the one who gives the Exercises consist in converting the retreatant into a true "author". Made personally responsible (SE.2 and 6), he is to respond through his prayers and supplications, his offerings and colloquies. The contemplation of the incarnation concludes with an invitation to "think over what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons or to the eternal Word Incarnate or to his Mother, Our Lady" (SE.109). The

retreatant becomes the author of a new text, his own Exercises. In the last analysis, however, the retreatant's text is only a beginning, because the author par excellence of the Exercises, the one before whom the other authors - Ignatius, the director, the retreatant - recede into the background, is "the Creator and Lord himself" (SE.15). The retreatant, it is true, starts the sentence, but it will have no meaning unless the Creator completes it - "offer him all... that his Divine Majesty may dispose..." (SE.5). Taking the "colloquy" seriously, the real communication between author and Author (SE.15) is "speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another, or a servant speaks to his master" (SE.54). But even Our Lady - right from the first week, in fact - is involved in the colloquies and belongs fully to the functional domain of the Exercises. By means of the triple colloquy Our Lady, too, becomes a co-author of the Exercises we make, sensitizing the expression of our desires and refining our reflection on the work of salvation and on ourselves. In his beautiful prayer to "the Virgin Mary at noon", Paul Claudel prays: "I have nothing to offer and nothing to ask for; I come, Mother just to gaze at you...". But this is only one aspect of the praying activity. In his "Spiritual Exercises, Karl Rahner sheds light on the specific aspect of the Exercises. "We should try to speak, in all simplicity and with all the tenderness of our heart, with the Woman of the new and eternal covenant; speak to her of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ; speak to her about herself, the one full of grace, who became all service and love; and speak to her about ourselves who so desire with her to follow Christ" (p.142). Not only do these words of Rahner capture that icon or Our Lady that the narrative section depicts; it also defines her role - her ministry - in the functional section as "nuestra Señora".

While the narrative part does not begin until the second week, functional part covers the entire sweep of the Exercises, right from the first week. Our Lady will be present throughout the process of the election. Indeed, she need no longer be mentioned explicitly: Ignatius is satisfied with inviting the retreatant to make the colloquies (SE.156, 168), in which Our Lady occupies a

preferential (SE.148), though by no means a necessary, place: "he may engage in only one colloquy with Christ our Lord" (SE.199).

The triple colloquy, which constitutes the essential element of the functional part in regard to Our Lady, was a practice disputed and challenged in Ignatius' own time. In a sermon he preached in 1546, Doctor Martin Luther illustrated the danger of the triple colloquy with an example borrowed from a sermon of Bernard of Clair-vaux: "... I wish to call on Mary, who will pray to her Son for me; the Son will pray to his Father, and the Father will listen to the Son. All this amounts to a picture that represents God in anger (needing to be placated), with Christ showing his wounds to him, while Mary presents her breasts to Christ..." (Oeuvres IX, p.346). This kind of criticism will issue in an insistence of the exclusiveness of the one Mediator (I Tim 2,5), or, as present-day Protestantism would have it, in the belief that Christ is sufficiently close to us to understand for himself what is so poorly expressed in the hearts of sinners such as we are - in the belief also that he loves us dearly enough to intervene directly in response to our prayers and present them to the Father without any other intermediaries. Ignatius does not exclude at all the direct recourse to the Son (SE.199); but, in the context of the above-mentioned controversy, the prayer of the triple colloquy becomes a confession of faith in an economy of salvation to which the Divine Majesty has chosen to associate Mary in a privileged manner, just as it chooses to have need now of our association and collaboration. This mediation of Mary is not added on to the unique mediation of Christ. The triple colloquy is not a sort of compulsory chain of mediations; it does not function after the fashion of a series of entreaties one must work through because immediate access to God has been barred. Beyond all theological controversies, Ignatius puts the finishing touches to his icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary by means of the triple colloquy. While the narrative part of the text of the Exercises depicts her as "Lady" - "Señora"-, the functional part highlights soberly, yet distinctly, the full significance of the fact that she is "Our Lady" - "Nuestra Señora".



This stands out clearly at the very first intervention of Our Lady in the Exercises, namely in the third exercise of the first week (SE.63). Here, then, the functional part exists before any introduction of the narrative part. By her action Our Lady leads us into the mystery of her Son, which in turn will illumine her own icon. Ignatius' introduction is, as usual, sober and concise: "To Our Lady, that she may obtain grace for me from her Son and Lord for three favours..." (SE.63). Our Lady is the mediatrix of a grace because she is, all at once, pure grace of God in herself ("grace... from her Lord") and associated with the work of this grace for us ("grace from her Son").

Since this intervention is situated at the very heart of the first week exercises, and since the grace asked for is interior knowledge of my sins, it is understandable that some authors see in this intervention of Our Lady the appearance of the "Immaculate one, whose purity lights up for us the way to forgiveness" (cf François Courel, Exercices Spirituels p.51), or the appearance of the "Immaculate Virgin who sums up all the perfection of the universe redeemed and restored to its original beauty" (cf Maurice Giuliani, Christus, p.41). More in keeping with the analyses we have so far presented of the title "Our Lady" is the suggestion made by Fr La Fontaine (Manresa, vol. 56, n.220, pp.205-217). Seeing that the graces we beg for in this colloquy through the intercession of Our Lady take up the three sins of the first Exercises (SE.45), but in reverse order, Our Lady in fact makes us pass from the history of sin - cf the genealogy Angel-Adam-Man - to the history of our salvation: cf Mary-the Son-the Father. In this activity - the functional part - the Lady comes to the fore as "Our" Lady, not only because she belongs to our race, because she is our "yes" to the salvation offered by the Father through his Son. This "our" is a point we must insist upon.

Using highly-concentrated cosmic language, Ignatius proposes as a prelude to the Exercises, in his "Principle and Foundation" (SE.23), that no person can

genuinely seek after God unless he/she be integrated within the human community, and conversely that no committed involvement in the human community is possible unless it flow from a discovery of "God-with-us". Just as the sin of the prodigal son leads to degrading isolation, so too the first week emphasizes how sin causes isolation from the human community. Suffice it here to quote some well known passages: "cast out in exile here on earth, to live among brute beasts" (SE.47); "I alone, what can I be?" (SE.58); "pass in review all creatures: how is it that they have permitted me to live?" (SE.60). Mankind is condemned to the solitude of blindness (SE.106) and to the isolation brought on by pride (SE.142).

Mary leads "the human race" as redeemed by the Divine Majesty (SE.107) into that universe of grace where men and women are "chosen" (SE.145) to be "mediators" to "conquer the whole world" "with me", the Son of Mary (SE.95). In this way the world becomes the universe re-created by "the love that comes from above", which is described in the contemplation to attain love (SE.230 ff), and is the very antithesis of what the first week makes us "weigh" and "ponder" as the infernal reality of sin (SE.57 and 234).

All are "mediators" for all: some are hell for others; yet some there are who sustain others in mutual solidarity on the road to salvation. In this world of mediators, the mediation of Mary is privileged on behalf of all others. The contemplation of the incarnation shows her as chosen from among all men for the salvation of all. Her "yes", humble and grateful (SE.108), pronounced on behalf of us, is not treasured as a thing of the past; but as an event of a graced personal history, her "yes" can be repeated "for the aid of souls", for the ongoing salvation of the world together "with us". In the trial of "solitude" (SE.208f) that along with suffering our solidarity in sin brought to Our Lady, Mary experienced what was demanded of her as mediatrix in the area of interior knowledge of sin as abhorrence for the disorder of the world and its worldly values (SE.63); in a word, all the consequences of saying "no". God willed to obtain

Mary's "yes" for his Son, and so there is no grace for us except through the "yes" of Our Lady. Ignatius is so convinced of this that, despite his "modernizing" tendency of not encumbering his devotion to Our Lady with legends (as in SE.310) or with pious meditations (SE.111), he makes us have access to the grace of Easter through the mediation of a first apparition of the Risen Lord to Our Lady (SE.219). For if grace comes down to us through Our Lady's "yes", our ascent to the Easter joy, poured out on us is also accomplished through Our Lady's mediation. In this way the narrative section confirm and completes that icon of Mary that Ignatius has depicted for us in the functional section by means of the characteristic traits of Our Lady.

This rapid survey of ours stands in need of revision and completion. It has been an attempt to illustrate the title of "Our Lady" given to Mary in the Exercises. A prayer by Ignatius sums it all up beautifully by emphasizing how Our Lady makes us change from weak men (first week) into strong ones (second week), from sad men (third week) into joyful ones (fourth week), through our mediation (that is, our work and efforts) and thanks to her unique mediation "with her Son and Lord" (SE.63) for the praise of God. "May it please Our Lady to intercede for us sinners with her Son and Lord, and to obtain for us the grace that, with the cooperation of our work and efforts she may change our weak and sorry spirits into strong and joyful ones to the praise and glory of God" (MI Epp. I,72).









