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MARY AND THE SPIRIT IN GOD'S GRACIOUS DESIGN

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To assert that Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) is a "Marian Pope" may appear to be a clear understatement. At every turn, his life seems to overflow with devotion to the Mother of God.

The pope grew up in Poland with its prominent Marian shrines (e.g. Jasna Gora/Czestochowa); Poland itself is dedicated to Mary under the title, Queen of Poland. In addition, his Marian theology and piety are anchored in his early study of Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort (*Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*). When he was chosen pope on October 16, 1978, he affirmed publicly his trust in Mary.

On May 13, 1981, when Turkish gunman Mehmet Ali Agca attempted to assassinate him, the pope entrusted his life to Mary; the day was the feast of Our Lady of Fatima. One year later he made a pilgrimage to Fatima and rededicated his life to Mary. John Paul II's coat-of-arms symbolizes Mary standing under the cross of Jesus. He gifted the Church with the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (RMa) in 1987, which he had declared a special Marian year.

The pope's programmatic apostolic letter on the Great Jubilee Year 2000, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (TMA), linked each year of preparation for the celebration (1997-1999) with Mary (TMA 43, 48, 54). The Trinitarian Jubilee celebration in 2000 witnessed the entire Church entrusted to "the maternal intercession of Mary" (TMA 59); she is the

fairest Daughter of the Father, the loving Mother of the Son, and the docile Spouse of the Holy Spirit. When the Jubilee year concluded, the pope noted in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI) that a "new millennium is opening before the Church," and that "we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary ... [to whom] I entrusted the Third Millennium"; he invoked her "as the 'Star of the New Evangelization'" (NMI 58).

From this broad panorama of Marian reflection, one could choose any number of themes for a fruitful exploration. This extended theological meditation, inspired by the thought of John Paul II—but not only limited to his writings, aims to elucidate the loving presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and person of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is noteworthy that the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit has emerged in recent studies of Pneumatology and Mariology as an exceedingly rich source of theological inspiration for Christian life and spirituality. And, while John Paul II has spoken extensively on Mary, he has also reflected deeply on the role of the Holy Spirit, particularly in his 1986 encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (DV). The passing of the millennial pope (April 2, 2005) provides an opportune moment and impetus for further exploration of this Spirit-Mary relationship.

FRAMEWORK OF INTERPRETATION

Reflection on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Mary is further enriched if set within a comprehensive theological framework. Conversely, the various events found in Scripture that portray the Mary-Spirit relationship may appear fragmentary if they are not integrated into an overall synthesis. Isolated Gospel events take on an enhanced depth of meaning when understood within a comprehensive interpretation.

Such an interpretive key is suggested by the full title that Vatican II gave to its eighth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* where one finds the Council's discussion on Mary. The Latin original reads: "*De Beata Maria Virgine Deipara in mysterio Christi et Ecclesiae.*" In the English translation

of Abbott, it is rendered: "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church."[1]

Following the lead of the Council, this presentation adopts the framework that locates Mary *within the divine mystery of salvation.* Admittedly, this is not an original insight; yet, it needs to be noted. At every turn, the isolated instances where Mary is presented in Scripture are integrated within a total history of salvation. Mary is thus portrayed as having a unique role in unfolding God's salvific design through the power of the Holy Spirit.[2]

As one reads the voluminous literature that has flowed from the hand—and heart—of John Paul II, it becomes eminently clear that he too speaks within such a comprehensive framework, whether he treats of moral, doctrinal, pastoral, spiritual, or social questions. The pope anchors his thought in "the eternal design of God," "*the divine plan of salvation*," "the saving mystery of Christ and the Church" (RMa 7, 38).

A brief excursus into the thought of Saint Paul (employed by Vatican II and John Paul II) will further illumine the comprehensive theological framework within which the roles of Mary and the Holy Spirit unfold. At the core of Pauline theology, one encounters the *mysterion*, understood as God's universal loving plan of salvation for all peoples (cf. Eph. 1:3-14; 3:1-13; Col. 1:24-29; 4:2-6; 1 Cor. 2:7-10; Rom. 16:25-27).

Paul is absolutely certain that God has a wonderful, marvelous, design of salvation for the whole world. His letter to the Ephesians convincingly—almost mystically—explains how "God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery" (Eph. 1:9), the mysterious design which for ages was hidden in God" (Eph. 3:9).

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[1]*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter Abbott (New York: America Press, 1966), 85.

[2]Paul VI, "Renewal of Devotion to Mary" (May 16, 1975), *The Pope Speaks* 20 (1975), 200-201.

Pauline reflection on God's loving plan of salvation (*mysterion*) synthesizes his belief that this design has been fully revealed in Christ the Savior and will be recapitulated in Christ at the end of time (Eph. 1:10). This manifestation is focused on salvation, not condemnation or judgment, and is open to all peoples (Rom. 16:25-27). It unfolds in many facets and stages: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Church, Mary, the world; humanity's response is faith or personal appropriation of the *mysterion.*

Paul was a true minister and servant of the *mysterion*; he believed, lived, prayed, labored, and suffered (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-28) so that God's loving plan for the redemption of humanity would become known and graciously received. Christians, in like manner, live the *mysterion* (spirituality), celebrate it (liturgy), share it (mission), and look forward to its final fulfillment in the parousia. Like Saint Paul, Christians strive to develop a deep "*mysterion*-consciousness."

This brief excursus into Pauline *mysterion* theology provides that comprehensive framework for interpreting the Spirit-Mary relationship (cf. RMa 5). It undergirds the main body of this presentation as it elucidates how Mary in the power of the Spirit unfolds God's *mysterion.* This piece unfurls Mary's inspiring journey of faith, accompanying her as she generously surrenders to her God-given role in the *mysterion*—all in response to the gentle action of God's Spirit. "God has used her [Mary] for the service of his own mystery ... when it pleased him to make this mystery a reality in this world."[3]

ADDITIONAL SIGNPOSTS OF INTERPRETATION

In preparation for this contemplation on the Holy Spirit's chief actions in her whom God chose for his mother, some few additional guidelines are offered.

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[3]François-Xavier Durrwell, *Mary: Icon of the Spirit and of the Church* (Middlegreen, Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1991), 7.

Mary's role must always be seen as subordinate to and anchored within God's *mysterion.* Paul VI clearly held to a basic principle in Pneumatology and Mariology: "the Holy Spirit first, Mary second."[4] The Spirit made Mary his collaborator in the work of humanity's salvation. He intervened in Mary's life in a personal way. As Person-Love of the Father and Son, the Spirit "acted with both infinite power and infinite gentleness in perfectly adapting the person of Mary and her dynamic powers of body and spirit to the role assigned her in the plan of redemption [*mysterion*]."[5]

Mary is always an active recipient of God's action, yet, a true collaborator. Her entire life—from beginning to glorification—is a constant faith response to the action of the Spirit. Faith continually opens Mary to an ever more profound unfolding of the *mysterion*; her life becomes a *series of fiats.* As recorded in the New Testament, her many "yes-responses" enable the one *mysterion* to be manifested on many occasions and in diverse ways.[6]

It would be inaccurate to somehow "semi-deify" Mary because she gave such a perfect faith-response to God's action in her life. Likewise, it would minimize her true "pilgrimage of faith" if, because she was perceived as "super-human," Mary's faith-struggles (Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Calvary, etc.) were not those of a fully human person. John Paul II in *Redemptoris Mater* speaks eloquently of "her personal journey of faith ... [within] the mystery of salvation" (RMa 5). Mary is a genuine, faith-full disciple. Through faith she enabled the Holy Spirit to abide in her as in a holy temple; her human personality became

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[4]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin" (May 13, 1975), *The Pope Speaks* 20 (1975), 101; Heribert Mühlen, "New Directions in Mariology," *Theology Digest* 24 (Fall, 1976), 289; Léon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, "The Holy Spirit and Mary," *A New Pentecost?* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), 197-200.

[5]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 102.

[6]Léon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, "The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit," *The Way: Supplement* 45 (1982), 8-10.

transparent to the Spirit; she can properly be called "Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit."[7]

In Mary's words, actions, silence and contemplation, God's *mysterion* (loving design of salvation) unfolds; through Mary there are many epiphanies of God's action. Her relationship was one of an ever-increasing docility and surrender to the Spirit. Her being and her awareness were transformed; yes, she developed a profound "*mysterion*-consciousness." In the Holy Spirit, Mary manifests how intensely God loves the world. John Paul II writes, "*At the center of this mystery*, in the midst of this wonderment of faith, stands Mary" (RMa 51).

KEY MOMENTS OF THE SPIRIT'S ACTION IN MARY'S LIFE

Pope Paul VI, in his apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (MC 26-27), encouraged Christians to reflect on the theme of Mary and the Holy Spirit. The pope noted that it is sometimes said that "many spiritual writings today do not sufficiently reflect the whole doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit." Specifically, he asked that theologians "meditate more deeply on the workings of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation.... Such a study will bring out in particular the hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth" (MC 27).

Paul VI realized that, while Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* (LG 52-69) had presented a beautiful overview of Mary in the Mystery of Christ and the Church, the Council had not given "a complete doctrine on Mary" (LG 54). Nor did the Council give a formal treatment of the relationship of Mary to the Holy Spirit; it had mentioned the Spirit about a dozen times in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium* and once related Mary to the Holy Spirit in the Decree on Mission (*Ad Gentes* 4).

Yet, since the Council, several authors have explored a theology of Mary and the Holy Spirit. This presentation now shifts to an

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[7]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 102.

examination of those *key moments* drawn from Scripture and Church reflection wherein the Spirit-Mary relationship is expressed.

At the outset, it should be observed that as each "event" is presented, its *source* in Scripture and Church teaching will be indicated; insights from popes, saints, and theologians will elucidate the *Spirit-Mary Dynamic* of the event; finally, an appropriate *theme for reflection* will be suggested. This approach intends to enhance the reader's *reflective understanding and appreciation of Mary and the Spirit* as the Church constantly renews herself in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, whose fortieth closing anniversary is celebrated this year (1965-2005). Admittedly, this presentation intends to be a theological-spiritual reflection and therefore does not lay claim to being a comprehensive Pneumatological-Mariological synthesis.

(1) Mary's Immaculate Conception. Pope Pius IX in *Ineffabilis Deus* on December 8, 1854 wrote: "we declare, pronounce and define: the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and in view of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God and, therefore, firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful."[8]

Paul VI described Mary's Immaculate Conception by noting that "It was the Holy Spirit who filled Mary with grace in the very first moment of her conception, thus redeeming her in a more sublime way in view of the merits of Christ, the Savior of mankind, and making her the Immaculate One."[9] From the very first moment of her existence Mary was being prepared by the Spirit for the sublime task that awaited her.

The Immaculate Conception does not signify a special grace that

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[8]*The Christian Faith*, eds. J. Neuner & J. Dupuis (New York: Alba House, 1996), 260-261.

[9]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 102.

was given to Mary at some later point of her life; it describes her person, her nature—from the beginning of her existence. She can truly say (as she did to Bernadette): I *am* the Immaculate Conception. Mary's whole being becomes a temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in her in a very special way.[10]

Mary's role in God's plan of salvation [*mysterion*] begins in the mystery of her Immaculate Conception. Without doubt, this is a special "irruption of grace"; a new and decisive stage in God's design has begun; the Holy Spirit is acting; the new creation is dawning. Mary has been "fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a new substance and new creature" (LG 56). Through the power of the Spirit, God has enacted a marvelous "turning point" in salvation. Contemplating this event, one can assert: *God is faithful; the mysterion unfolds with love.*

(2) Annunciation to Mary. Saint Luke's beautiful story of the Annunciation (Lk. 1:26-38) is a very clear statement on the role of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow" (Lk. 1:35). "For nothing is impossible to God" (Lk. 1:36). "I am the handmaid of the Lord ... *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*" (Lk. 1:37-38).

All is grace: the angel Gabriel announces the unfolding of the mystery through the power of the Spirit. Mary's response—free, prayerful, generous—is that she be worthy of the divine mysteries to unfold in her life. "Mary's 'yes' to God was flaming with faith; it was an unqualified assent, without reserve and without either false humility or futile dramatics. It was given in holy silence.... Mary [became] the perfect type of the servant and agent of the Holy Spirit"[11]

God's action overwhelms with its love. Life will spring forth from a peasant girl—filled with the Spirit. Mary rejoices to surrender

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[10]Dwight Campbell, "The Holy Spirit and Mary," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 93: 8 (1993), 16.

[11]John Cardinal Wright, "Mary, Type of Servant and Agent of the Holy Spirit," *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition) 8:25 [377] (June 19, 1975), 10.

herself—body, soul, and spirit. In the Annunciation she certainly moved to a new level of consciousness; she became more deeply aware of the *mysterion*—and her role in its unfolding. She now has a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, whom John Paul II calls "Person-love" and "Person-gift" (DV 10, 22, 50). This relationship will grow, blossom, and bear fruit in her very being, her person.

What richness is included in that simple word: *fiat.* It is the only authentic response possible to God's marvelous design. John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* is fashioned around Mary's *fiat,* her faith; the pope writes: "In these reflections ... I wish to consider primarily that 'pilgrimage of faith' in which 'the Blessed Virgin advanced'" (RMa 5). Saint Augustine poetically captures Mary's profound faith when he writes: "*Maria concepit Christum in corde [mente] priusquam in carne [ventre].*"[12] Yes, Mary's conception *in her faith* precedes the conception *in her flesh.*

The Second Vatican Council notes: "By thus consenting to the divine utterance ... in subordination to Him and along with Him, by the grace of almighty God, she served the mystery of redemption. [Mary is thus] cooperating in the work of human salvation through free faith and obedience" (LG 56).

The words of John Paul II speak eloquently: "This *fiat* of Mary—'let it be to me'—was decisive, on the human level, for the accomplishment of the divine mystery.... The mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished when Mary uttered her *fiat* ... [that is in] as far as it depended upon her in the divine plan.... Mary uttered this *fiat in faith*" (RMa 13).

Succinctly, "faith is contact with the mystery of God.... From the moment of the Annunciation, the mind of the Virgin-Mother has been initiated into the radical 'newness' of God's self-revelation and has been made aware of the mystery" (RMa 17). Faith is nothing less than *living into mystery.* Readers will find much to contemplate as they consider *Mary's fiat and her free response of faith.*

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[12]Frederick Jelly, "Characteristics of Contemporary Mariology," *Chicago Studies* 27 (1988), 71.

(3) Virginal Conception. Flowing from Mary's *fiat* is her virginal conception of the Word-made-flesh. In Matthew's Gospel (Mt. 1:18-25) it is stated that Mary the Virgin is "with child through the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:18). Joseph is advised that "what she has conceived is in her by the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:20).

Paul VI notes that it was the Spirit that inspired Mary's consent "to the virginal conception of the Son of the Most High and made her womb fruitful so that she might bring forth the Savior."[13] John Paul II declares that the "union of divinity and humanity in the one Person of the Word-Son, that is the 'hypostatic union,' ... is the Holy Spirit's greatest accomplishment in the history of creation and in salvation history."[14]

This unique moment in salvation history "was a complete and therefore hypostatic descent of the Holy Spirit and entry to the Virgin Mary.... [Through] his coming into the Virgin Mary [he] identifies himself in a way with her through her God-motherhood, [and] he does not at all leave her after the birth of Christ, but remains forever with her in the full force of the Annunciation."[15] The Holy Spirit abides "in the ever-virgin Mary as in a holy temple, while her human personality seems to become transparent to Him."[16] Enduring intimacy is a defining characteristic of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

Matthew notes that the fruit of this virginal conception will be a son to be called Emmanuel, a name which means "God-is-with-us" (Mt. 1:23)—equivalently "Word-made-flesh" (John 1:14). All this is made possible because Mary gave the Spirit total freedom in her

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[13]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

[14]John Paul II, "Christ: Totally Holy, Body and Soul" (June 6, 1990), *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition) 23:24 [1144] (June 11, 1990), 5.

[15]Michael O'Carroll, "The Holy Spirit," in *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 332.

[16]O'Carroll, "The Holy Spirit," 332.

life. It is accurate to hold that Mary's fundamental charism was that of receiving the gift of the Spirit; she allowed the Christ-seed to be sown in her; she allowed the Body of the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, to be formed in her. Mary accepts the Redemption into her own heart; "the mystery of the Redemption took shape beneath the heart of Mary."[17]

The Incarnation is truly a profound mystery. By her consent to be the Mother of Jesus Christ, Mary "gave an extraordinary demonstration of faith." Through the power of the Holy Spirit, she "expressed her acceptance of the divine gift of salvation, not only for herself but for all mankind; ... her involvement in God's saving plan [*mysterion*] was not to be limited to that single moment. In God's design she was to continue to be intimately involved in the great saving mission of her Son. She was destined by God to be his Mother, not only in the physical sense, or in the private sphere of the home, but also in the public domain, on the plane of the history of salvation: she was to be his Mother too in his role as Redeemer of mankind."[18] A reflection can center on: *Faith bears fruit; for us, the Word is made flesh.*

(4) Visitation to Elizabeth. The Visitation story is chronicled in Luke 1:39-45. The scene presents Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit and impelled by love, rushing to the aid of her cousin Elizabeth who also is pregnant—even in her old age. In God's loving plan, nothing is impossible. What a scene of great joy! Mary and Elizabeth, both faithful women of Israel, have been blessed by the Most High.

When Mary enters Zechariah's house, Elizabeth replies to Mary's greeting and feels the child leap in her womb; being filled with the Holy Spirit, she greets Mary enthusiastically: "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk. 1:42).

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[17]Catalino Arévalo, "Pope John Paul II on Mary, the Mother of the Lord," *Ministry Today* 1:2 (1985), 42.

[18]Kevin McNamara, *Mary, the Mother of God* (London: Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 1982), 6-7.

Note the active presence of the Holy Spirit in this scene. Mary, prompted by the Spirit undertakes a difficult journey into the hill country; she went in haste; she was on a mission of service. She could have rationalized staying at home. When she arrives at Zechariah's house, her presence brings the Holy Spirit to both Elizabeth and the child in her womb. Prompted by the Spirit, Elizabeth responds with a blessing; the unborn baby leaps in her womb.

It seems that every word of Elizabeth's greeting has a special meaning: "Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk. 1:45). Who is blessed? The one who *believes* in God's promise, God's design, God's *mysterion.*

Note that the evangelist says that Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 1:41) when she uttered these words. Those filled with the Spirit can recognize God's plan, praise and thank God for it, and joyfully accept their role in the unfolding of this loving plan. Two generous, holy women share their faith. Both would be mothers of important and significant figures in God's salvific design; faith-filled, Spirit-inspired women are central to the workings of God.

The Visitation scene prompts reflection on a gift from the Holy Spirit: *a lively sense of mission and service.*

(5) Mary's Spirit-inspired *Magnificat.* The prayerful, poetic genius of Saint Luke is manifested in Mary's hymn of praise known as the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1:46-55); it is sung daily in the heart of the Church during Vesper prayer. Paul VI writes: "It was the Holy Spirit who filled her [Mary's] soul with jubilant gratitude and moved her to sing the *Magnificat* to God her Savior."[19] When the Church celebrates Marian feasts, her liturgy notes that "it is our special joy to echo her song of thanksgiving [*Magnificat*]. What wonders you have worked throughout the world. All generations have shared the greatness of your love" (Second Preface of the Blessed Virgin Mary).

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[19]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

This beautiful song of gratitude, sung under the Spirit's inspiration, is a brief, yet profound, synopsis of *how* God intends to unfold his *mysterion*, *what* his plan of salvation entails, and *what role* Mary will play within this unfolding design. The *Magnificat* asserts many profound truths: salvation comes from a loving God and is a cause for rejoicing; lowly servants like Mary play important roles in God's design; God does great deeds for his faithful people; mercy, shown to Israel's ancestors, will extend from age to age and the promises to Israel will be fulfilled; the world's secular values will be subverted and inverted; God's plan will be for all peoples and for all generations. The *Magnificat* is a sublime example of authentic prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit.

John Paul II calls Mary's *Magnificat* an "*inspired profession of her faith*"; it is "*her response to the revealed word*"; in it "Mary's personal experience, the ecstasy of her heart, shines forth." Here one sees a brilliant "ray of the mystery of God, the eternal *love which, as an irrevocable gift, enters into human history.*" These Spirit-inspired utterances reveal "the deepest truth about God and [humanity's] salvation." Mary is "aware that concentrated within herself as the Mother of Christ is *the whole salvific economy*" (RMa 36).

Mary's *Magnificat* "is both *personal* ('he who is mighty has done great things for *me*' [Lk 1:49]) and *social* (her proclamation serves Elizabeth's faith). The experience of the Spirit always involves seeing and hearing; it is never a private, purely inner and mental relationship with God. Elizabeth and Mary, then, serve one another, each in a unique way; ... one charism calls forth another, and the faith of one aids the faith of another."[20]

As the Church-in-mission journeyed toward the celebration of the Great Jubilee Year 2000, John Paul II reminded Christians: "The Church's *love of preference for the poor* is wonderfully inscribed in Mary's *Magnificat*.... Mary is deeply imbued with the spirit of the 'poor of Yahweh'." "Drawing from Mary's heart, from the depth of her faith

[20]Mühlen, "New Directions in Mariology," 291.

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.*" The entire Church looks to Mary "as Mother and Model ... in order to understand in its completeness the meaning of her own mission" (RMa 37). Meditating on Mary's *Magnificat,* readers can reflect on the fact that *authentic prayer includes gratitude, praise, social awareness, and commitment.*

(6) Mary Reflects on the Events of Jesus' Birth-Childhood. This section presents a composite picture of the role of Mary and the Holy Spirit in the events of the birth and childhood of Jesus. It incorporates several passages from the infancy narratives of Luke and Matthew: *birth* (Lk. 2:1-7); *visit of shepherds* (Lk. 2:8-20); *visit of magi* (Mt. 2:1-12); *sojourn in Egypt* (Mt. 2:13-15); *life at Nazareth* (Lk. 2:39-52; Mt. 2:19-23); *presentation in the temple* (Lk. 2:22-38). How did Mary follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit during those many years of her "hidden life" with Jesus and Joseph?

It is valid to assert that the Spirit inspired Mary to be a "giver" of Jesus to people. In the mystery of Jesus' birth, she gave him to the world; she presented him to the shepherds and the magi; she presented him to the joyful, old man Simeon. Mary struggled with giving Jesus to the temple teachers, fearing that he had been lost. Many works of Christian art consistently show Mary in a "presenting-mode"; she presents Jesus to all peoples of the world—represented by the various Scripture scenes listed earlier.

Luke also portrays Mary as a woman of constant reflection. In three instances, he focuses on Mary's "response of the heart." As the shepherds depart, Luke writes: "As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19). Simeon in the temple predicts that "the secret thoughts of many hearts [including Mary's] will be laid bare" (Lk. 2:34-35). When the Holy Family returned to Nazareth after Jesus was found in the temple, "his mother stored up all these things in her heart" (Lk. 2:51).

A particular manifestation of the Spirit's presence in Mary is seen

in her ability to insightfully read the deep meaning of the mysteries unfolding in her life; Mary contemplated the wonders of God—often in eloquent silence. Through meditation and the "storing of all things in her heart" she discovered God; she lived the injunction of the Hebrew Scriptures: "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).

In her response of active contemplation, Mary deepens her relationship with the Spirit throughout her entire life. Mary continually realizes that the *fiat* she spoke when the Spirit came upon her in Nazareth was actually a commitment to an ongoing submission to God and his *mysterion.* Reflective faith is most characteristic of Mary, as Saint Luke took care to note.

One example succinctly illustrates Mary's "response of the heart." When Luke describes Simeon's role during the presentation of Jesus in the temple, he specifically links Simeon to the Holy Spirit three times. Simeon speaks God's word to Mary; in particular, he points out that her role in God's unfolding mystery will entail suffering. Mary accepts this difficult dimension of the *mysterion* in faith, a faith that only emerges from deep contemplation and a true commitment of the heart.

This scene—and Mary's overall faith response—is well captured by John Paul II. "Simeon's words seem like a *second Annunciation* to Mary, for they tell her of the actual historical situation in which the Son is to accomplish his mission, namely in misunderstanding and sorrow.... [They reveal that] she will have to live her obedience of faith in suffering, at the side of the suffering Savior, and that her motherhood will be mysterious and sorrowful" (RMa 16).

As the whole panorama of events mentioned in this section serves to illustrate, Mary's participation and insight into God's *mysterion* demand constant reflection and meditation. Learning from Mary's experience and practice, Christians realize that *meditation (prayer of the heart) is essential for integrating faith and daily life.*

(7) The Mother of Jesus at Cana. Examination of the text of John 2:1-11 that records the wedding at Cana reveals no explicit mention of the Holy Spirit. Yet, Paul VI identifies this as an important event that manifests Mary's responsive openness to the Spirit: "It was

the Holy Spirit who urged the compassionate Mary to ask her Son for that miraculous change of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, which marked the beginning of Jesus' activity as a wonderworker and led his disciples to believe in him."[21]

The encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* devotes a lengthy section to the Cana scene and Mary's Spirit-inspired actions on that occasion. "Mary is present at Cana in Galilee as the *Mother of Jesus*, and in a significant way she *contributes* to that 'beginning of the signs' which reveal the messianic power of her Son" (RMa 21); a new stage in the unfolding of the *mysterion* begins in Cana.

The Cana event also "outlines what is actually manifested as a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say *Mary's solicitude for human beings*; ... this coming to the aid of human needs means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ's messianic mission; ... the episode at Cana in Galilee offers us a *sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation*, wholly oriented toward Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power" (RMa 21-22).

Some Scripture exegetes see a second pneumatological theme in the Cana narration; they hold that Cana parallels/foreshadows Pentecost. John 2:1-11 has many aspects of a Pentecostal meditation, with striking similarities to the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts. Only in John 2:1 and Acts 1:14 is the precise expression "the mother of Jesus" used; the old wine has run out and the disciples and the mother of Jesus ask for the new wine of the Spirit, which is given in abundant measure to those obedient to Jesus' command; they then brim with the Spirit and bring this gift to others.[22]

The liturgical Preface for Our Lady of Cana builds on this double,

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[21]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

[22]Joseph Grassi, "The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11): A Pentecostal Meditation?" *Novum Testamentum* 14 (1972), 131-136.

pneumatological theme: "With loving care for the bridegroom and his bride, she turns to her Son for help and tells the servants to do what he commands. Water is changed into wine [and] the wedding guests rejoice.... In this great sign, the presence of the Messiah is proclaimed, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is foretold, and the hour of salvation is foreshadowed." A theme that suggests itself for reflection is: *sensitivity and compassion for human need result in outpourings of the Holy Spirit.*

(8) Mary at the Foot of the Cross. The coat-of-arms of John Paul II graphically illustrates this *stabat mater* scene of Mary standing at the foot of the cross. On the right side of the seal under the bold cross, one finds the capital letter "M" in the place usually thought of as Mary's position at the crucifixion. John Paul II frequently returns to this poignant scene for his meditations; it seems, as Arévalo notes, "he cannot write or speak at any length on the mystery of the Redemption without taking us to Mary's side at the foot of the Cross."[23]

Vatican II gave prominence to this scene: "the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan [*mysterion*] (cf. John 19:25). There she united herself with a maternal heart to his sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth" (LG 58).

In Paul VI's understanding, "It was the Holy Spirit who strengthened the soul of the Mother of Jesus as she stood beneath the cross, and inspired her once again, as he had at the Annunciation, to consent to the will of the heavenly Father who wanted her to be associated as a mother with the sacrifice her Son was offering for mankind's redemption."[24]

Numerous writers carefully note that Calvary was a significant moment in Mary's *fiat.* Her surrender and consent "did not remain on

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[23]Arévalo, "Pope John Paul II on Mary, the Mother of the Lord," 42.

[24]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

the level of her initial response. It grew through the darkness of the Cross ... [as] an actual and personal reality."[25] "Mary will live this consent [*fiat*] to communion with Jesus without restriction until Calvary."[26]

Spirituality author George Maloney writes: "At the foot of the Cross especially did Mary experience the final purification of the Holy Spirit.... She wrung from the depths of her being, through the power of the Holy Spirit's faith, hope, and love within her, her renewed '*fiat*.'... The unifying, transforming power of the Holy Spirit brought Mary into a new level of oneness with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that was in proportion to her sorrows."[27]

In the same vein, John Paul II writes in his encyclical on Divine Mercy (*Dives in Misericordia*): "*No one has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the Crucified One,* the mystery of the Cross.... No one has received into his heart, as much as Mary did, that mystery, that truly divine dimension of the Redemption effected on Calvary by means of the death of the Son, together with the sacrifice of her maternal heart, together with her definitive '*fiat*'" (DM 9).

The pope extols Mary's *fiat*: "How great, how heroic then is the *obedience of faith* shown by Mary in the face of God's 'unsearchable judgments'! ...And how powerful too is the action of grace in her soul, how all pervading is the influence of the Holy Spirit and of his light and power" (RMa 18). Christians join Mary in her *fidelity in trial, suffering, and even death* on all the Calvaries of the world.

(9) Mary and Her Maternal Mission. With great tenderness John the Evangelist (John 19: 26-27) records the words of Jesus on Calvary to "his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her."

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[25]Seunens, "The Holy Spirit and Mary," 203.

[26]René Laurentin, "Mary and the Holy Spirit," in International Marian Research Institute, *Mary in Faith and Life in the New Age of the Church* (Ndola, Zambia: Franciscan Mission Press, 1983), 287.

[27]George Maloney, "Mary and the Holy Spirit," in *Mary: The Womb of God* (Denville: Dimension Books, 1976), 92.

The Spirit's presence and action in the episode is noted: "It was the Holy Spirit who filled the Sorrowful Mother with immense love, widening and deepening her heart, as it were, so that she might accept as a last testament from the lips of her Son her maternal mission with regard to John, the beloved disciple: a mission which, 'as the Church has always understood it,' prefigured her spiritual motherhood toward mankind as a whole."[28]

Mary's maternity unfolds in this pattern: "Under the leading of the Spirit, Mary consents actively to the Redemption. By receiving the words 'Behold your Son,' she opens her Immaculate Heart to receive the Heart of her Son ... into her own heart. Thus, she becomes manifestly to the world the Mother of the Redeemed.... And we—each one of us, like John the disciple—can go to her."[29]

This marvelous fact does *not* make Mary "Co-redeemer" (a term avoided by Vatican II). Under the Spirit's influence, Mary humanly cooperated in the acceptance of *God's* salvation. The words of Vatican II are clear: "The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no way obscures or diminishes [the] unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power" (LG 60). However, the Council does speak of Mary as "Mediatrix" in a carefully nuanced presentation (LG 62). The entire third chapter of *Redemptoris Mater* is devoted to a reflection on the "Maternal Mediation of Mary" (RMa 38-50).

This Calvary scene is understood as one of three key moments in Mary's motherhood. First, in Nazareth Mary becomes the mother of Jesus spiritually [*mente*] and physically [*ventre*] by welcoming him into her heart in faith. Secondly, at the foot of the Cross she becomes the Spiritual Mother of all (represented by Saint John). Finally, at Pentecost she becomes specifically "Mother of the Church"—a Marian title announced by Paul VI on November 21, 1964.[30]

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[28]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

[29]Arévalo, "Pope John Paul II on Mary, the Mother of the Lord," 44.

[30]McNamara, *Mary, the Mother of God*, 8.

John Paul II's words again prove enlightening. Under the Cross, "Mary's motherhood of the human race ... is clearly stated and established. It *emerges* from the definitive accomplishment of *the Redeemer's Paschal Mystery.* The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery—a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity—is given to every single individual and all mankind." The pope observes, "the Council did not hesitate to call Mary 'the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind'" (RMa 23).

Some writers see in John 19:30 a "proto-Pentecost" when Jesus "gave up his spirit" as he died on the cross.[31] An adequate discussion of that point is beyond the scope of this theological meditation. Through frequent reflection, *Christians experience an intimacy with Mary their mother*; they praise God for sharing his mother with all humanity.

(10) Mary with the Church at Prayer and Pentecost. Building upon the Lukan narration of the Church at prayer (*ecclesia orans*) and the Pentecost event (Acts 1:14-2:13), Paul VI writes in his characteristically poetic manner: "It was the Holy Spirit who raised Mary on the burning wings of love so that she might be a model intercessor during those hours in the Upper Room when the disciples of Jesus 'together ... devoted themselves to constant prayer' along with 'some women ... and Mary the Mother of Jesus' and waited for the promised Paraclete."[32]

Several eminent theologians have written on the role of the Spirit and on the presence of Mary at Pentecost, when the Church is fully born and sent into the world in the power of the Spirit. Hans Urs von Balthasar holds that at Pentecost the Church as a subject begins to be present in Mary and is perfected through the mystery of the Holy Spirit; "Mary's living faith is the perfect prototype of what is expected in the

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[31]Raniero Cantalamessa, *Mary: Mirror of the Church* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 190ff; Laurentin, "Mary and the Holy Spirit," 287; Mühlen, "New Directions in Mariology," 291.

[32]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

life of the Church."[33] Carroll observes: "Mary is herself a member of the Church, joined to her Son by her pilgrimage of faith on earth, joined now to the Risen Christ, and in both stages under the influence of the sanctifying Spirit."[34]

For Schmemann, "Mary is truly the icon and the epiphany of the Church—of the Church as life in Christ and of the Church as Christ's life in us."[35] Congar writes: "Mary has a pre-eminent place in the Christian mystery as the model of the Church and of universal intercession. This is the work of the Spirit in her."[36] Would that space permitted an extended commentary on these profound insights!

Other writers highlight the clear parallelism between the Incarnation and Pentecost. They see that the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost is, in fact, the continuation of the mystery of the Incarnation that took place in Mary by the operation of the Holy Spirit.[37] In both cases the Spirit overshadows, first Mary alone and then Mary with the first believers. There is the birth of the bodily Christ, then the birth of the Church, the Body of Christ.[38]

This beautiful parallelism is captured well by Bishop Kevin McNamara: "At the Annunciation Mary co-operated with the Spirit in the Incarnation of the messiah, destined to be the Savior and ruler

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[33]Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: God's Yes to Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 170.

[34]Eamon Carroll, "The Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary," in *Understanding the Mother of Jesus* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979), 69.

[35]Alexander Schmemann, "Our Lady and the Holy Spirit," *Marian Studies* 23 (1972), 75.

[36]Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Vol. I* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 164.

[37]Arévalo, "Pope John Paul II on Mary, the Mother of the Lord," 44.

[38]Maloney, "Mary and the Holy Spirit," 81; Christopher O'Donnell, *Life in the Spirit and Mary* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1988), 89-90.

of his people; at Pentecost she co-operates with the Spirit in the emergence of that people on to the stage of human history. She who had first become the Mother of Christ is now revealed as Mother of the Church, and central to her motherhood on each occasion are the humility, obedience and loving trust in God which unite her profoundly to the Holy Spirit."[39]

On this point John Paul II, once again, manifests his eloquence: "And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: *Mary at Nazareth* and *Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem.* In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of 'birth from the Holy Spirit.' Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes—by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit—present in the mystery of the Church" (RMa 24).

In contemplating Mary at prayer in Nazareth and in the Upper Room, Christians will deepen their awareness that *prayer begets radical openness to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

(11) Assumption of Mary into Heaven. On November 1, 1950 in the apostolic constitution *Minificentissimus Deus* Pius XII defined as an article of faith the Assumption of Mary into the glory of heaven. Twenty-five years later, another pope wrote: "It was the Holy Spirit who brought love to its supreme pitch in the soul of Mary while she was still a pilgrim on earth and made her yearn for reunion with her glorified Son. The Holy Spirit thereby disposed her for her crowning privilege: her Assumption body and soul into heaven."[40]

The Assumption, as understood by Byzantine Christians, is "Mary's

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[39]Kevin McNamara, "The Holy Spirit and Mary," *The Way: Supplement* 51 (1984), 13.

[40]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 103.

demise, *koimisis*, a dormition, a restful sleep, a repose rather than a death."[41] When Pius XII defined the dogma, he carefully noted: "Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was ended, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven."[42] Saint John Damascene asserted that Mary's earthly departure should not be called death. In addition, Vatican II asserts Mary's Assumption "upon the completion of her earthly sojourn" (LG 59). These few quotes enable believers to understand the Assumption as the Spirit's unique gift to Mary.[43]

Belief in the Assumption affirms Mary's link to Jesus within the mystery of salvation. Through His resurrection, which was a work of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 1:3-4), Jesus is Lord of lords, the conqueror of sin and death. Mary, through her Assumption, becomes more thoroughly conformed to her Risen Son. Christ's Resurrection and subsequently Mary's Assumption stand as two pillars of Christian faith in full resurrection. Through the power of the Spirit, Mary remains uniquely linked to Christ—whether in the Incarnation, the life at Nazareth, Calvary, or in her glorious Assumption.

John Paul II affirms this beautiful gift of the Spirit to Mary: "By the mystery of the Assumption into heaven there were definitely accomplished in Mary all the effects of the one mediation of *Christ the Redeemer of the world* and *Risen Lord*: 'In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ' (1 Cor. 15:22-23)" (RMa 41). Looking to Christ as Risen Lord and believing in Mary's Assumption, *Christians strengthen their faith in the resurrection*, which they believe will also be a personal event for them in God's unfolding *mysterion*.

(12) Mary as Our Heavenly Intercessor. Although enjoying the full glory of heaven, Mary does not abandon her sons and daughters in

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[41]Maloney, "Mary and the Holy Spirit," 93.

[42]Neuner & Dupuis (eds.)., *The Christian Faith*, 264.

[43]O'Donnell, *Life in the Spirit and Mary*, 90.

the Church. Vatican II expresses Mary's continual maternal presence in this way: "For, taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role, but by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation" (LG 62). The Council went on to say: "In the bodily and spiritual glory which she possesses in heaven, the Mother of Jesus continues in this present world as the image and first flowering of the Church ..." (LG 68). "Mary's maternity will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect" (LG 62). Indeed, "Mary [is] a Sign of Sure Hope and of Solace for God's People in Pilgrimage" (title for sections 68-69 of LG).

Paul VI speaks eloquently on this special gift of the Spirit enabling Mary to be our Intercessor. He notes that her place in heaven does not "put an end to Mary's mission as associate of the Spirit of Christ in the mystery of salvation.... She continues to be spiritually present to all her redeemed children.... Mary's motherhood in the economy of grace goes on unceasingly."[44]

On this same theme, permit the introduction of a lengthy passage (because of its clarity and eloquence) from Paul VI's writings: "We must therefore keep in mind that the activity of the Mother of the Church in behalf of the redeemed neither substitutes for nor rivals the omnipotent, universal action of the Spirit. Mary's role is rather to impenetrate and prepare for the action of the Holy Spirit, not only through intercessory *prayer* that accords with the divine plan she contemplates in the beatific vision but also through the direct influence of her *example*, including the supremely important example of her docility to the inspirations of the divine Spirit. Thus it is always in dependence on the Holy Spirit that Mary leads souls to Jesus, forms them in his image, inspires them with good counsel, and acts as a living bond of love between Jesus and the faithful."[45]

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[44]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 104.

[45]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 104.

Without doubt, Mary's role as spiritual mother and intercessor is, in the writings of Paul VI and John Paul II, not something vague, remote or abstract. It is an intimate, consoling, fruitful relationship. The Spirit is always at work here; every spiritual experience, including the relationship with Mary as mother and intercessor, is accomplished only through the mediation of the Spirit of Christ. This means, therefore, that as Christians seek to draw closer to Mary in the Church, they will concomitantly become more aware of the action of the Holy Spirit in their lives. McNamara says: "The more Mary, the Spirit and the Church merge into one another in our thoughts, in our prayers, in our lives, the more authentic is our vision of God's plan of salvation [*mysterion*]."[46]

Totus Tuus in John Paul II's coat-of-arms proclaims his total dedication to Mary as Intercessor and Mother of the Church. In the Spirit he frequently implores Mary to show a mother's love, care, and protection for the Church (a mission similar to his own). To Mary he commits every aspect of the Church's life; to her he entrusts his own Papal ministry. Even in times of great difficulty and suffering (e.g. the assassination attempt, his final sickness and death), John Paul II, quoting Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, proclaims: "*Totus tuus sum, O Maria, et omnia mea tua sunt.*"[47] All Christians rejoice to have *Mary as their maternal intercessor in the power of the Spirit*; each Christian also proclaims *Totus tuus sum.*

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

In the introductory comments of this theological meditation, it was noted that "this presentation adopts the framework that locates Mary *within the divine mystery of salvation.*" Through examining key events in Mary's life, a deeper awareness and appreciation of the Spirit-Mary

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[46]McNamara, "The Holy Spirit and Mary," 22.

[47]Bernard LeFrois, *Mary and the Spirit* (Baguio, Philippines: Allied Printers, 1990), 28.

relationship has emerged. Continuing personal reflection will reveal many additional insights—more profound than the points considered here. The author's hope has been that his cursory treatment would evoke in readers a personal reflection on the role of the Spirit in Mary's life—and in their own lives.

Mary's faith-journey is a precious treasure for Christians who wish to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in one of God's humble handmaids; Mary's experience is a gift of the Spirit. Since "she is a charism of the Spirit in person," Christians can learn from Mary "to believe more purely, to discern the Spirit more clearly, to listen to the Word more intently, and to await more creatively the hour of the Lord's coming."[48] Yes, through Mary and the Spirit, all can enter more fully into God's *mysterion*—in its profound beauty.

Mary's relationship to the Spirit is at its foundation an *awareness and surrender* to God's infinite love and action in her person and her life; Mary brimmed with "*mysterion*-consciousness." She allowed herself to be "a woodwind for the Lord," to play God's song with the Spirit's "pure and tranquil tone."[49] She said *fiat*: "I am your reed.... Now, if you will, breathe out your joy in me."[50]

Mary invites all her children to discover and open themselves to the Spirit. Her faith-response can serve as a sure and inspiring criterion for appreciating the revelation and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Mary continues to remain "present in the mystery of the Church as a *model*" (RMa 44). Those who allow themselves to come under the dominion of the Spirit will find they are also more closely united with Mary.

In the Holy Year of 1975 Paul VI spoke words that are always appropos to Christian disciples, to the entire Church. He noted:

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[48]Suenens, "The Holy Spirit and Mary," 211.

[49]Maloney, "Mary and the Holy Spirit," 95.

[50]Caryll Houselander, *The Reed of God* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1944), 53.

"the faithful must cultivate an outstanding devotion to the Spirit as the supreme source of love, unity, and peace. At the same time however, and in harmony with this first devotion which draws ever new strength from the fire of the Divine Love, the faithful should also be deeply devoted to the great Mother of God who is Mother of the Church."[51]

The prayer of Ildefonsus of Toledo[52] is a fitting way to conclude these reflections and humbly lay them at the feet of Mary:

> I beg you, I beg you, O holy Virgin, that I may have Jesus from the Spirit from whom you conceived Jesus. May my soul receive Jesus through the Spirit, through whom your flesh conceived the same Jesus. Let it be granted to me to know Jesus from the Spirit, from whom it was given to you to know, to have and to bring forth Jesus. May I in my lowliness speak exalted things of Jesus in that Spirit, in whom you confess yourself to be the handmaid of the Lord, choosing that it be done unto you according to the angel's word. May I love Jesus in that Spirit in which you adore him as Lord, contemplate him as your Son.

[51]Paul VI, "The Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin," 106.

[52]O'Carroll, "The Holy Spirit," 330.

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