



Marian Doctrine and Devotion

Chapter 14



Marian devotions are those prayers and acts undertaken to honor Mary and with the intent of seeking her intercession with her Son, Jesus, and his Father. Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not, however, amount to worship - which is reserved for God alone. Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed a three-level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* that applies to God, the Virgin Mary and then to the other saints.

The Roman Catholic Church holds many teachings associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Four of these specific doctrines have been raised to the level of dogma, meaning in technical terms that they must be held by the faithful as essential to participation as Roman Catholics. The four Marian dogmas have been defined by the magisterium over the course of Christian history, using both Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the two elements of the one source of Revelation, as evidence for these proclamations. These four dogmas are: Mary the Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity of Mary, The Immaculate Conception, and The Assumption of Mary into Heaven. The twentieth-century has seen a significant drive to establish a fifth and final Dogma-Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

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Chapter 14

Mediatrice of All Graces:

The term Mediatrice in itself could refer to either objective or subjective redemption or both. It is most usual to use it to refer only to subjective redemption, i.e. , the process of giving out the fruits of the objective redemption, throughout all centuries. We must consider whether or not the term applies to all graces or only to some. We will ask also about the nature of the mediation: is it only by way of intercession, or even by way of being a physical instrument of all graces. There is no doubt the title would be justified, and would apply to all graces for certain, by her cooperation in acquiring all graces on Calvary.

1) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Supremi Apostolatus officio*. Sept 1, 1883. ASS 16, 1883. 1113: "We judge nothing more powerful and better for this purpose than by religion and devotion to deserve well of the great Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, who is the treasurer (sequestra) of our peace with God, and the mediatrice (ministra) of graces... ."

be ever counted together with Him. "As we said, we reply that her whole ability comes from Him. Really, the Father did not need her at all, except that if He decreed the incarnation, He necessarily decreed a Mother: she was and is that Mother. But everything else in which He has employed her is not needed. Yet: 1) if we recall the alternatives of redemption, it is clear that the Father wants everything to be as rich as possible, so that He will not stop with something lesser if there is more than can be done. Really, the incarnation in a palace, without death, would have been infinite in merit and satisfaction, as we saw above. 2) Further the principle of St. Thomas helps here. In I. 19, 5. c. Thomas says that it pleases God to have one thing in place to serve as a title or reason for granting something further, even though that title does not move Him. It is His love of all goodness and good order that leads Him to act this way. Hence too, even though Calvary earned infinite forgiveness and graces, the Father wills to provide titles for giving out these, in the Mass. Even though He did not need even our Lady, yet He willed to employ her. Even though there is no need of any other saints, in objective or subjective redemption, yet He wills to add them—all to make everything, every title, as rich as possible.

4. LG speaks of her as taking care of all her children. We are extremely numerous, but yet not infinite in number. Therefore, we are not too numerous for her to see and care for. For her capacity for that infinite vision of God is in proportion to her love on earth, so great that Pius IX, as we saw, said it was so great that "none greater under God can be thought of, and no one but God can comprehend it."

5. What is the nature of her mediation? Surely, she works by way of intercession. But theologians have also asked: Is she also a physical instrument of grace? Many today, influenced by Protestantism, tend to speak of grace merely as favor, and so say grace is not a thing given. But that would imply Pelagianism, the heresy that says that we can be saved by our own power. For if God merely sits there and smiles at me, and gives me nothing, that would mean that I had to do it by my own power. So even if one uses the word favor, this must always be in mind. But St. Thomas Aquinas holds that the sacraments are physical instruments of grace (III. 62. 4). Then the priest giving absolution would be a physical instrument of grace. So all the more she would be such an instrument. If she is, then the course of grace is this: grace begins in the divine nature, passes through the Sacred Humanity of Christ (a physical instrument), then through Mary (also a physical instrument) and then, if a sacrament is being given, through it as a physical instrument also. This seems to be precisely the sense of the text of Leo XIII, *lucunda semper*, cited above. It fits well with the words of St. Pius X in *Ad diem illum* and some other texts we have already cited.

End

intercession, she continues to win the gifts of eternal salvation for us. By her motherly love, she takes care of the brothers of her Son who are still in pilgrimage and in dangers and difficulties, until they be led through to the happy fatherland. For this reason, the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adiuatrix, and Mediatrix. This however it to be so understood that it takes nothing away, or adds nothing to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. For no creature can ever be put on the same level with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer... ."

Comments: 1. We notice Vatican II did not add the words "of all graces." First, they were not needed, since, as several of the papal texts point out, her role in dispensation flows logically from her role in acquiring all graces. Second, the real reason for not adding it, and for putting the title Mediatrix in a list of other titles was the influence of Protestant observers, who had said in advance that if the Church calls her Mediatrix, dialogue on the topic would be ended. Cf. C Balic, "El Capitulo VIII de la Constitucion 'Lumen gentium' comparado con el Primer Esquema de La B. Virgen Madre de la Iglesia: in Estudios Marianos 27, 1966, p. 174.

Further, the Council itself added a note on the above passage, in which it refers us to the texts of Leo XIII, *Adiutricem populi*, St. Pius X, *Ad diem illum*, Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, and Pius XII, Radio message to Fatima. Leo XIII in that text spoke of her, as we saw above, as having "practically limitless power." St. Pius X said she was the "dispensatrix of all the gifts, and is the "neck" connecting the Head of the Mystical Body to the Members. But all power flows through the neck. Pius XII said "Her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion." Still further, no Council has the right to cancel previous papal teaching, especially when that teaching, on the ordinary Magisterium level, is repeated. For such repeated teaching is infallible.

2. The following papal texts cited above speak in varied ways of her as Mediatrix of all graces: Leo XIII, especially texts 3 and 4: "nothing at all of that great treasury of all grace... is imparted to us except through Mary... . every grace has a threefold course... . St. Pius X: especially texts 9 and 10: "Dispensatrix of all the gifts." She is the "neck" of the Mystical Body. Benedict XV text 12: "Whatever of graces He confers... . always with her as minister and decision-maker" Pius XI, texts 13. 14. 15: "treasurer of all graces" Pius XII, text 18: "nothing is excluded from her dominion". John XXIII, text 19: "Did not the Lord will that we have everything through Mary?"

Again, since a doctrine repeatedly taught on the Ordinary Magisterium level is infallibly taught—so many repetitions of this doctrine mark it as infallible.

3. Protestants object, saying that there is only mediator: 1 Tim 2:5. But they fail to make distinctions. There is only one 1) who is such by very nature, having both divine and human natures; 2) whose work is necessary; 3) who depends on no one else for power. She differs on all three counts. Her whole ability to do anything comes entirely from her Son, and hence we are not contradicting LG §62 which says no creature can

2) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Superiore anno*, August 30, 1884. ASS 17, 1884. 49: "... may He hear the prayers of those who beseech through her, whom He Himself willed to be the mediatrix (administratrix) of graces."

3) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Octobri mense adventante*, Sept 22, 1891, ASS 24, 1891, 196: "... it is right to say, that nothing at all of that very great treasury of all grace which the Lord brought us—for 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' [Jn 1. 17]—nothing is imparted to us except through Mary, since God so wills, so that just as no one can come to the Father except through the Son, so in general, no one can come to Christ except through His Mother."

4) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Iucunda semper*, Sept 8, 1894. ASS 27, 1894. 179: "... when He [the Father] has been invoked with excellent prayers, our humble voice turns to Mary; in accordance with no other law than that law of conciliation and petition which was expressed as follows by St. Bernardine of Siena: 'Every grace that is communicated to this world has a threefold course. For by excellent order, it is dispensed from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, from the Virgin to us.'" (Internal quote from St. Bernardine, Sermon on Nativity of B. V. M. n. 6).

5) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Adiutricem populi*, Sept 5, 1895, ASS 28, 1895, 130: "For thereupon, by divine plan, she so began to watch over the Church, so to be near and to favor us as a Mother, that she who had been the minister (administratrix) of the mystery of human redemption, was equally the minister (administratrix) of the grace to be given from it for all time, practically immeasurable power being given to her."

6) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Diuturni temporis spatium*, Sept 5, 1898, ASS 31, 1898, 146: "For from her, as in a most abundant conduit, the drafts of heavenly graces are given: '... in her hands are the treasures of the mercies of the Lord; for God wills that she be the principle of all good things.'" (internal quotes are from St. John Damascene. Series I De Nativitate Virginis and St. Irenaeus, Against Valentinus III. 33).

7) Leo XIII, Encyclical, *Diuturni temporis spatium*, Sept 5, 1898, ASS 31, 1898, 147: "'God wills her to be the principle of all good things'" (citing St. John Damascene, Series I De nativitate Virginis.)

8) Leo XIII, *Parta humano generi*, Apostolic Letter, Sept 8, 1901, ASS 34, 1901, 195: "So may the most powerful Virgin Mother, who once 'cooperated in love that the faithful might be born in the Church', be even now the means and mediatrix of our salvation." (Citing St. Augustine, De sancta Virginitate 6).

9) St. Pius X, Encyclical, Ad diem illum, Feb. 2, 1904, AAS 36, 1904. 453-54: "Hence that never dissociated manner of life and labors of the Mother and the Son... there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, not merely occupied in looking at the dreadful sight, but even rejoicing that 'her only Son was being offered for the salvation of the human race; and so did she suffer, with Him, that if it had been possible, she would have much more gladly suffered herself all the torments that her Son underwent' [St. Bonaventure I. Sent. d, 48, ad Litt. dub. 4.]. Now from this common sharing of will and suffering between Christ and Mary, she 'merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world' [Eadmer, De Excellentia Virginis Mariae, 9] and therefore Dispensatrix of all the gifts which Jesus gained for us by His Death and by His Blood... But Mary as St. Bernard fittingly remarks [De Aquaeductu 4.] is the 'channel' or, even, the neck, through which the body is joined to the head, and likewise through which the head exerts its power and strength on the body. ' For she is the neck of our Head, by which all spiritual gifts are communicated to His Mystical Body'" [St. Bernardine of Siena, Quadrag. De Evangelio aeterno, Sermo X, a. 3. c. 3.]

10) St. Pius X, Litterae Apostolicae, August 27, 1910, AAS 2, 1910, 901: "We, to whom nothing is dearer than that the devotion of the faithful towards the Virgin of Lourdes, the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces, be more and more increased, think we should gladly assent to these wishes."

11) Benedict XV, Litterae Apostolicae, Inter Sodalicia, March 22, 1918, AAS 10, 1918, 182: "... the fact that she was with Him crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. For with her suffering and dying Son, Mary endured suffering and almost death. She gave up her Mother's rights over her Son to procure the salvation of mankind, and to appease the divine justice, she, as much as she could, immolated her Son, so that one can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race. But if for this reason, every kind of grace we receive from the treasury of the redemption is ministered as it were through the hands of the same Sorrowful Virgin, everyone can see that a holy death should be expected from her, since it is precisely by this gift that the work of the Redemption is effectively and permanently completed in each one... further, there is a most constant belief among the faithful, proved by long experience, that as many as employ the same Virgin as Patron, will not at all perish forever."

12) Benedict XV, Encyclical, Fausto appetente die, June 29, 1921, AAS 13, 1921, 334: "For he [St. Dominic] knew well that Mary... has such influence with her divine Son, that He confers whatever of graces He confers on humans, does so always with her as minister and decision-maker [administra et arbitra]."

13) Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, Galliam, Ecclesiae filiam, March 2, 1922, AAS 14, 1922 186: "She, the Virgin Mother, [is] the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces with God."

14) Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, Exstat in civitate, Feb. 1, 1924, AAS 16 1924, 152: "It is clear that many Roman Pontiffs... have stirred up devotion among the nations to the most clement Mother, the Virgin Mary, the Consoler of the afflicted, and the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces with God."

15) Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, Cognitum sane, Jan 14, 1926, AAS 18, 1926, 213: "We, to whom nothing is dearer than that the devotion of the Christian people be aroused more and more towards the Virgin who is the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces with God, think we should grant these wishes."

16) Pius XI, Encyclical, Ingravescentibus malis, Sept 29, 1937, AAS 29, 1927, 380: "... we know also that all things are imparted to us from God the Greatest and Best, through the hands of the Mother of God."

17) Pius XII, Encyclical, Mystici Corporis, June 29, 1943, AAS 35, 1943, 248: "May she, then, the most holy Mother of all the members of Christ, to whose Immaculate Heart we have confidently consecrated all people... ask earnestly that most abundant streams of graces from the lofty Head may flow down on all the members of the Mystical body without interruption."

18) Pius XII, Radio message to Fatima, Bendito seja, May 13, 1946, AAS 38, 1946, 266: "... having been associated, as Mother and Minister, with the King of martyrs in the ineffable work of human Redemption, she is always associated, with a practically measureless power, in the distribution of the graces that derive from the Redemption... And her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion."

19) John XXIII, Epistle to Cardinal Agagianian, Legate to Marian Congress in Saigon, Jan 31, 1959, AAS 51, 1959, 88: "For the faithful can do nothing more fruitful and salutary than to win for themselves the most powerful patronage of the Immaculate Virgin, so that by this most sweet Mother, there may be opened to them, all the treasures of the divine Redemption, and so they may have life, and have it more abundantly. Did not the Lord will that we have everything through Mary?" Discorsi II, 66: "From her hands hope for all graces."

20) Vatican II, Lumen gentium §§61-62: "... in suffering with Him as He died on the cross, she cooperated in the work of the Savior, in an altogether singular way, by obedience, faith, hope, and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls. As a result she is our Mother in the order of grace. This motherhood of Mary in the economy of grace lasts without interruption, from the consent which she gave in faith at the annunciation, and which she unhesitatingly bore with under the cross, even to the perpetual consummation of all the elect. For after being assumed into heaven, she has not put aside this saving function, but by her manifold