

ACCORDING TO THY WORD:

A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF
THE BIBLICAL MYSTERIES OF
THE ROSARY

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OUTLINE AND STUDY GUIDE

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Introductory Remarks / Tools for Study:

Participants will trace the biblical origins of the classic Marian prayer known as *The Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (“Rosary”). While the development of the Rosary as a devotional is often linked with medieval piety (Dominicans), its authentic roots are located deep within Sacred Scripture. A full account of the Rosary – with all reverence for blessed St. Dominic – takes us back much further – to the Old Testament ... and to a small hamlet in northern Israel – called *Nazareth*.

This seminar attempts to “get beneath” the Rosary itself: the Pater Noster (“Our Father”), the Ave Maria (“Hail Mary”), and all 20 mysteries of the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries. To the above end, a fourfold pattern of study will be involved:

- A. Scripture.** Our primary text is *the Bible*. Above all, it is Sacred Scripture that anchors and guides the entire experience. As such, participants are encouraged to, above all, carefully examine and study the biblical texts pertaining to the Rosary: the *Pater Noster* (“Our Father”), the *Ave Maria* (“Hail Mary”), and all 20 mysteries of the *Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious* mysteries.
- B. Catechesis.** Along with Sacred Scripture, participants will examine a number of related catechetical texts of the Catholic Church. Some of the primary sources include the following: *Summa Theologica*, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, papal encyclicals pertaining to Mary / the Rosary, and the Documents of Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*). As a matter of practice, the *Catechism* will be the “starting point” and standard for catechetical / doctrinal reflection according to Sacred Tradition.
- C. Commentary.** In addition to these primary sources, participants will read selections from a variety of biblical commentaries: the Church fathers and doctors, medieval theologians, modern / contemporary scholars (e.g. *Origen, St. Augustine, St. Hillary, St. Bonaventure, Romano Guardini, Joseph Ratzinger, John Meier, N.T. Wright, Edward Sri.*)
- D. Prayer.** Finally, the study of each “mystery” includes Marian prayer. All of the robust study is intended to lead to not only a deeper intellectual appreciation for the Rosary, *but a more profound contemplation of its divine truths in the life of Christian prayer and growth in holiness.* Participants are encouraged to pray the Rosary – and other Marian prayers suggested in this study guide.

Note: Two indispensable tools for this study are the *Holy Bible* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In order to save space in this study guide, Scriptures will often be abbreviated to address only. In some instances, texts will be cited in their entirety. Many but not all references from the Catechism may be cited fully; thus, having a Bible and Catechism “at the ready” for quick reference will prove extremely helpful throughout this study.

While it is beyond the limits of this guide to include all of the texts mentioned in this course, wherever possible, such texts from the Church fathers, encyclicals, other commentaries will be included below. An additional resource for study, referenced periodically in this course is the following: Edward Sri, *The New Rosary in Scripture: Biblical Insights for Praying the 20 Mysteries*. Cincinnati: Servant Books, 2003.

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary:

The Fulfillment of History and Theology

“From henceforth all generations will call me blessed.” (Luke 1:48) [*This expression*] was beginning to be filled with historical reality.” - Joseph Ratzinger¹

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Getting “beneath” the Dominican heritage

- i. “In the 12th century the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Dominic, transmitting to him the devotion as we know it ...”
- ii. The above reflects the conventional wisdom as far as the development of the prayer known as the Rosary. While it is widely accepted, and part of our tradition of the Rosary, it does not go far enough in helping us understand the many “puzzle pieces” that together form a more complete picture of the Rosary.
- iii. A full account of the Rosary – with all reverence for blessed Sr. Dominic – takes us back much further – to the Old Testament ... and to a small hamlet in northern Israel – called *Nazareth*.
- iv. * Our desire is not to up-end these beautiful traditions from medieval Europe – but rather, to show that they were essential *but later developments* in the grand story of the Rosary.

B. Dominic prays to Mary for intervention

- i. St. Dominic (13th cent) and St. Alanus 15th) who are greatly heralded as the “origin point” of the Rosary.
- ii. Little known about actual events of the apparition of Mary to *St. Dominic de Guzman* (1170-1221). Said to have transpired in the year 1214 in the chapel of the first Dominican house in Prouille (S France).
- iii. Most of our information about Dominic’s vision comes from the Dominican theologian *Blessed Alanus de Rupe* (1428-1475), who writes of the apparition of Mary to Dominic (and later, himself) and of her conveying the prayers of the Rosary to Dominic 250 years prior.
- iv. Alanus states his account was not the first of Mary’s apparition to Dominic. He explains that “15 Promises” were given to Dominic by Mary – and later, re-stated when she appeared to him (graces, special protection, spurs virtue, etc.)

C. The Battle for Europe – and Dominic’s Prayer

- i. St. Alanus records that Mary’s appearance to Dominic was response to his fervent prayers to the Virgin, for intervention with ‘*Catharism*,’ a widespread heresy wreaking havoc in 12th - 13th century Europe (a sort of Gnostic dualism).
- ii. Given this, the conveying of the Rosary to Dominic – and the promises that accompanied it now taken on a deeper historical dimension; *the Rosary as we know it emerges as a powerful weapon in times of darkness*, that all who pray to Mary would find strength for battle, grace and mercy in time of desperate need, and the light of Christ.

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, “Hail, Full of Grace,” in: *Mary, Church at the Source* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1980), p. 61.

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary (Continued)

D. Following the Wisdom of the Church:

- i. The visions are not challenged here; yet even some conservative Dominican scholars question their historicity. It's worth noting that the Church has not authenticated these apparitions; and even the Dominicans speak of them in somewhat "legendary" terms.
- ii. Let us follow closely the wisdom of the Church, particularly in all of the papal documents that pertain to the Rosary, where such topics arise. There, we observe a sense of deep reverence for these traditions – despite the cautious tone and brief mention of them.²
- iii. Kevin Orlin nicely summarizes the immense influence of the Dominicans in his historical survey of the prayer of the Rosary: "It is true that St. Dominic chose the Blessed Mother as the special patroness of the great order that he founded, and that he encouraged people to pray that *Angelic Psalter*, as the Rosary was usually called in his day ... his order has done more than any other to extend the devotion ... the Rosary, in the developing form it had at the turn of the thirteenth century, was *St. Dominic's primary weapon when he turned back the tide of heresy in the south of France*.³
- iv. Three crucial effects of St. Dominic's encounter with Mary:
 1. **A Prayer for Spiritual Combat.** The Rosary became a formidable "weapon" in a time of darkness across Christendom. It bolstered the faithful for battle, while reminding all of the truth about Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man. The Rosary was integral in the dissolution of the fires raging in the heretical age – and is in our intense times of upheaval as well.
 2. **Untold Conversions.** The proliferation of the Rosary had a great spiritual impact upon the Church in medieval Europe. While many had been praying the '*Angelic Psalter*', many more were unacquainted with it. The Dominicans were great *catechists*, and through their promulgation of the Rosary, there were many conversions and deeper discipleship across Europe – and just as the Reformation was about to unfold.
 3. **Consolidation of the Rosary.** Dominic brought about a "consolidation of the Rosary." While there existed a proto-rosary in the centuries leading up to Dominic, with an array of devotions in play, he brought about "streamlining" of these of traditions into a *simple, unified and universal form* of the devotion. Mary is a mother, our Mother, and she *speaks* to her children in *powerful* and *unifying* ways. Through the deep, deep devotion of the Dominicans to Mary, came about *the one devotion which all of Mary's children forevermore pray – the Rosary.*

² While some may view this aspect of the story as more "legend" than "fact," I believe that St. Dominic did indeed encounter the Blessed Virgin in a profound and mystical way. What can be confidently asserted is the debt of gratitude due the Dominicans; without which (on a human level), the popularity and longevity of the Rosary would be unclear. This is a profound spiritual legacy – for which we should thank Christ, Mary – and St. Dominic.

³ Kevin Orlin Johnson, *Rosary: Mysteries, Meditations, and the Telling of the Beads*, Pangaeus Press, p. 50

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary (Continued)

II. THE ‘PROTO-ROSARY’: FROM JEWISH LITURGY TO MONASTIC DEVOTION

A. The Jewish Roots of the Rosary: the Ancient Psalter

- i. *The Psalter* was the prayer book of ancient Judaism. Although specific daily liturgical practice in ancient Judaism is less clear, it is unquestioned and accepted as fact that ancient Jewish spirituality was deeply rooted in the Psalter of the Temple.
- ii. The great Jewish feasts of *Tabernacles*, *Pentecost* and *Passover* occupied pride of place as the three most significant liturgical events.
- iii. Alongside them is the crucial weekly *Sabbath*, and a host of other lesser but still significant liturgical feasts (e.g. Dedication, Purim, etc.), as well as *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) and *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year).
- iv. Apart from all of these, there are the daily sacrifices in the Temple, and it is held that the majority of the Psalms were the songbook for these various occasions.
- v. Second Temple period (518 B.C. – 70 A.D.), *the synagogue movement* began, and with it, the importance of non-sacrificial worship (e.g. praying the Psalter) intensified.
 1. Jewish colonies cropped up across the Mediterranean and Asia Minor, in cities like Rome and Alexandria.
 2. After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 A.D.), massive changes occurred in Judaism as it settled into a “religion of the book.”
 3. Eventually, this Diaspora enveloped the world, with Jewish colonies in Italy, Greece, Russia, Germany and across the European continent.
- vi. The synagogue movement expanded in the Christian era, and with it, down through the centuries, the regular *praying of the Psalter*.
- vii. This liturgical practice in Judaism, of praying the Psalter, both morning and evening, was carried over in new ways in early Christianity.
 1. The earliest Christian Eucharistic liturgies contained prayers right from the Psalter, sung and / or chanted by the faithful.
 2. The Desert fathers were particularly instrumental in terms of chanting the Psalter at various hours of the day.

B. Dating the Events of the Rosary: The New Testament and Beyond

- i. **3 B.C. – 9 A.D. – “Joyful” Mysteries**
 1. The Annunciation of the Archangel to Mary of Nazareth (*Luke* 1:26-38)
 2. The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth – Ein Karem, Judea (*Luke* 1:39-56)
 3. The Nativity of Jesus of Nazareth – Bethlehem, Judea (*Luke* 2:1-20)
 4. The Presentation in the Temple – Jerusalem (*Luke* 2:22-40)
 5. The Finding in the Temple – Jerusalem (*Luke* 2:41-52)
- ii. **30 A.D. – “Luminous Mysteries”**
 1. The Baptism in the Jordan River (*Matt.* 3:13-17 / *Mark* 1:9-11 / *Luke* 3:21-22)
 2. The Wedding Feast at Cana, Galilee (*John* 2:1-11)
 3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom, Capernaum, etc., Galilee (*Matt.* 6:25-27 / *Mark* 1:14 / *Luke* 15:11-24)
 4. The Transfiguration, Mt. Tabor (likely), Israel (*Matt.* 17:1-8)

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary (Continued)

5. The Institution of the Eucharist, Jerusalem (*Luke 22:15-16*)
 - iii. **April, 30 A.D. – “Sorrowful” Mysteries**
 1. Jesus’ in the Garden, Mt. of Olives, Judea (*Matt. 26:36-46 / Luke 22:39-46*)
 2. Jesus is Scourged at the Pillar by Roman Soldiers, Jerusalem (*Matt. 27:15-26*)
 3. Jesus is Crowned with Thorns, Jerusalem (*Matt. 27:27-31*)
 4. Jesus Carries the Cross (*Luke 23:23-31*)
 5. Jesus is Crucified, Outside the Walls of Jerusalem (*Matt. 27:35-66 / Mark 15:25-47 / Luke 23:33-56 / John 19:18-42*)
 - iv. **April, 30 – A.D. – 70 A.D. “Glorious” Mysteries**
 1. The Resurrection of Jesus, Jerusalem (*Matt. 28:1-15 / Mark 16:1-18 / Luke 24:1-49 / John 20:1-21:25*)
 2. The Ascension of Jesus, Mt. of Olives, Judea (*Acts 1:1-11 / Mark 16:19-20 / Luke 24:50-53*)
 3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit, Jerusalem (*Acts 2:1-41*)
 4. The Assumption of Mary (*Psalms 132:8 / Luke 1:28 / Rev. 12:1-6*)
 5. The Crowning of Mary (*Luke 1:43 / I Kings 1:16, 31; 2:17, 20*)
- C. The Paternoster (and other developments) in Early Christianity**
- i. **80 – 120 A.D.** *The Didache* encourages Christians to pray the Paternoster 3x a day.
 - ii. **155 A.D.** Before his martyrdom, *St. Polycarp* prays the Paternoster, with the addition of ‘Amen’ at its completion.
 - iii. **211 A. D.** ‘*We mark our foreheads.*’ Tertullian writes that the *Sign of the Cross* was common practice among Christians and fundamental to *discipleship & public witness.*
 - iv. **235 A.D.** *The ‘Key of Heaven’ Prayer.* Discovered in excavations in Egypt in 1917 and published in 1921. Thought to be the oldest prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary:
“We fly to your patronage, O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but delivers us always from all danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.”
 - v. **250-350 A.D.** St. Anthony the Great develops a woolen cord for praying the Psalter.
 - vi. **331 A.D.** Constantinople (Turkey) becomes the seat of the Roman Empire.
 - vii. **341 A.D.** Abbot Paul of Thebes prayed 300 Paternosters by moving pebbles from one pile to another.
 - viii. **400’s:** *St. Patrick* recites the 150 psalms of the Psalter & encouraged monks to do so. He urged the to make the *Sign of the Cross* 100x in the morning and 100x at night.
 - ix. **500’s** Ireland: *St. Columba & St. Gall* urge *all the faithful*, not just monks, to “pray without ceasing” (*I Thess. 5:17*). *St. Bridgit of Kildare* carried a small string of stone beads for her daily prayer, “*as was the custom among the hermits.*”

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary (Continued)

- x. **600's** Russia: Byzantine Church begins use of *Chotki* – a knotted woolen prayer cord. The main prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' This would later come to be known as the "Jesus Prayer."
- xi. **600's** Ireland: Monks keep track of the Psalter on knotted wollen cords. Those unable to read the Psalter are encouraged to substitute by chanting 150 Paternosters.

D. 'Hail, Full of Grace' – The Gradual Evolution of the Prayer

- i. **600's** Continental Europe: Some are gradually replacing the 150 *Paternoster's* with 150 *Ave's*. However, only the Angel's greeting is said and the name of Mary is not yet proclaimed. (E.g. *Hail, Full of Grace*).
- ii. **700's**: *The Apostles Creed*, though developed centuries earlier, is proclaimed along with the reciting of the Paternosters (or Ave's) before or after the prayers.
- iii. **900's** Ireland: Many trace the "proto-rosary," to Ireland in this period:
 1. *Stage 1*: The 150 psalms of the Psalter are prayers on wollen cords with tied knots at the location of the *Ave's* -- and small stones at the location of the *Paternosters*. The illiterate are encouraged to substitute *Ave's* as needed.
 2. *Stage 2*: The full *Angelic Salutation* was added to the abbreviated *Ave*. St. Peter Damian (d. 1072) is the first to mention this development.
 3. *Stage 3*: Some conceive of the Psalter as 'veiled mysteries' of Christ' (allegory).
- iv. The emergence of "*Psalters of Our Lord Jesus Christ*" are now being composed -- 150 in number. Marian Psalters are likewise developed, numbering 50 and referred to as a *rosarium*, or "bouquet of roses."
- v. **1007** Italy: St. Peter Damian first refers to the developing prayer in shorthand as the 'Hail Mary' can refers to it as "angelic" and "evangelical." He recommends it as *a universal prayer of the Church* – no longer for monks alone, but for all Christians.
- vi. **1014** Germany: Blessed Herman, a Benedictine monk, writes many hymns, among them *Salve Regina* ("Hail, Holy Queen"). Beginning at the Abbey of Reichenau in Germany, the *Salve Regina* is added as the concluding prayer of the Rosary.
- vii. **1000-1100**: Wooden & clay beads replace simpler knotted cords across Europe.
- viii. **1075** England: Lady Godiva wills her beads to the monks of the Monastery of Coventry. After her death, they are draped over the statue of *Our Lady of Coventry*.
- ix. **1088** Italy: Pope Urban II, at a Synod of Bishops in Rome, requires all clergy to pray the Rosary daily. Specifically, he urges that the devotions include the Apostles Creed, the *Paternoster* and the *Ave*. Also, by the end of the 10th century, the praying of *Ave's* (on the *Ave's*) is coming to replace the *Paternoster*.
- x. **1109** England: St. Anselm develops a special *Rosarium* in honor of Mary. The *Ave's* are composed not of the 150 psalms but more abbreviated expressions that are gleaned directly from the psalms.

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary (Continued)

III. Epilogue: Ancient Evidence and Use of “Prayer beads”

A. Counting on Beads

- i. **1200-1500:** In terms of design, handheld rosary beads begin to follow a more uniform design, which we now recognize as the Holy Rosary. This is in conjunction with the gradual but steady form of the prayers themselves, which are becoming more universally accepted.
- ii. Counting /chanting of prayers is an ancient art which transcends continents and is deeply rooted in diverse cultures and religious traditions.
- iii. The questions of *when* and *where* the earliest use of “prayer beads” originated is not known with any certitude. The question of *why* is relatively easier to determine:
 1. The practice of “praying with beads” provided a means of *memorization and vocalization of set prayers* by individuals & communities.
 2. There is a sense of *preserving through teaching* of the prayers, e.g., instructing newer members, children, etc.
 3. Finally, there is typically a sense of *dignity and deep devotion* attached to the very prayers that are chanted upon the beads: *These prayers are special, holy, worthy of particular care and frequent resuscitation.*
- iv. In terms of origins, there is a multiplicity of overlapping independent traditions of praying on beads in far-flung regions of the globe for over a 1000-yrs prior to the Rosary, which emerged in the medieval period.
- v. Counting on fingers, hands preceded the use of beads.
- vi. The term *bead* itself is interesting; it originates from the early Anglo-Saxon root *bede* which simply means “prayer.”
 1. The ‘*Venerable Bede*’ is linked to this etymology, i.e. “Man of Prayer.”
 2. *Bidden* means “to pray” and the expression, “I bid thee farewell” literally meant “I pray that all will go well” on a trip or journey.

B. Earliest Excavations of Prayer Beads in Non-Christian Cultures

- i. Hindu Sculptures of sandstone found in ancient India & Tibet (c. 185 B.C.) of persons holding or wearing *japamala* (prayer beads). The English translation of *japamala* is “rose chaplet.”
- ii. Similar examples in Buddhist & Islamic excavations; Buddhist examples from Indo-China (400-500 B.C.) predate the *japamala*; Islamic forms are naturally identified from the early Islamic period (700-900 A.D.) from Persia & the Arabian Peninsula.
- iii. Hindu, Buddhist & Islamic traditions: the number of beads varied widely (33 - 100+), depending on the accompanying prayers that were chanted.
- iv. There does not seem to be a prolific use of beads in early rabbinic Judaism.

C. The Desert Fathers and the “Proto-Rosary”

- i. The *Desert fathers* are rightly noted out as the earliest Christian examples of “beaded devotions,” and subsequent to them, the monastics. These early devotions were considerably different from the Rosary.

Topic #1 The Biblical Roots of the Holy Rosary (Continued)

- ii. The Desert Fathers would have originally used finger counts and later small stones for the rhythmic counting of the psalter and / or the Paternosters.
- iii. The monastics encountered such practices from non-Christians along mid-eastern trade routes; thus, the “use of beads” was sort of picked up by the early monastic communities.

D. The Uniqueness of the Rosary – as a Personal and Meditative Prayer

- i. **The Rosary – much more than a “beaded chant.”** The above (epilogue) illustrates how *ancient* and *universal* praying with beads really is, across many cultures through the centuries. Yet, the Rosary is *much more than a beaded chant*. While global traditions of *praying with beads* is fascinating, critical distinctions must be made between the prayer of the Rosary ... and other world religions, lest we make the Rosary into merely a cultural-religious custom, a “Catholic thing.”
 - 1. Given the many permutations of such ‘prayer bead’ customs, in virtually all the great religions and cultures of the world, what is needed to bring them to their completion and fullness ... is Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Only Christ can give life to these habitual customs, and bring the one chanting them into a *loving and personal relationship* – with the Lord of all, whose love for all is infinite ... and whose Mother is indeed a Mother to all.
- ii. **The Rosary: A Biblical prayer.** Second - the Rosary is wholly biblical, rooted in the Old Testament – and unintelligible apart from the mysteries of the Four Gospels. Moreover, the evolution of the Rosary from its earliest stages suggests ever deeper roots, all the way back to the Psalter, of meditating upon the loving kindness of *the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*.
- iii. **The Rosary: To Jesus, with Mary.** Third - what these religious traditions lack – with all respect, is *the personal and meditative sense* that accompanies (or ought to) the one who prays the Rosary:
 - 1. The Rosary is profoundly *personal* ... The Rosary not a mere cultural or “religious” custom – in fact, it is devoid of meaning if it is not understood that it is prayer, prayer to the true, living Person, Jesus Christ.
 - 2. The Rosary is *deeply meditative* ... We contemplate Christ in all of His infinite mystery: the Incarnation, *the Passion and Resurrection, His Ascension into heaven*. His presence in our lives.
 - 3. All of this coalesces in our relationship with Mary; through Mary, we meditate upon the mysteries of Christ, and come towards Him in a personal way. We encounter Mary, and as we do, we are taken up to the Person of Christ. We seek her intercession, and meditate upon her glorious role in the salvation that comes to us in and through *our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Topic #2 – Mary & the Rosary in Pastoral Life Today

* The following is a timely discussion about the Rosary in our lives today: praying the Rosary, obstacles for others, talking with others about Mary, etc. Audio participants are encouraged to “listen in to the conversation.” There are no notes for this section as such; however, participants are encouraged to read the following, if access is possible: Edward Sri, *The New Rosary in Scripture: Biblical Insights for Praying the 20 Mysteries*. Cincinnati: Servant Books, 2003. Chapters 1 + 2.

Topic #3 – The Threefold Pattern of the Mysteries of Christ

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING CHRIST’S (AND MARY’S) ENTIRE LIFE IN SACRED SCRIPTURE – REVELATION, REDEMPTION & RECAPITULATION –

Dr. Smith explains three crucial paragraphs from the Catechism – and how they are instructive for study of not only the mysteries of the Rosary, but the entire Gospel, and the entire mystery of Christ’s life ...

CCC 516 Christ’s whole earthly life—his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking—is *Revelation* of the Father. Jesus can say: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” and the Father can say: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father’s will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest “God’s love ... among us.”

CCC 517 Christ’s whole life is a mystery of *redemption*. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross, but this mystery is at work throughout Christ’s entire life:

- already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty;
- in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;
- in his word which purifies its hearers;
- in his healings and exorcisms by which “he took our infirmities and bore our diseases”;
- and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.

CCC 518 Christ’s whole life is a mystery of *recapitulation*. All Jesus did, said, and suffered had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation:

When Christ became incarnate and was made man, he *recapitulated* in himself the long history of mankind and procured for us a ‘*short cut*’ to salvation, so that *what we had lost in Adam, that is, being in the image and likeness of God, we might recover in Christ Jesus*. For this reason Christ experienced all the stages of life, thereby giving communion with God to all men.

Topic #4 – The Lord’s Prayer

THE ANCIENT JEWISH HOPE FOR A NEW EXODUS IN THE LORD'S PRAYER – OT ROOTS /NT FULFILLMENT; IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY

“For almost two thousand years, Christians have recited the words of the Lord’s Prayer, the only one that Jesus is recorded as having taught his disciples (*Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4*). In the second century, Tertullian declared it to be “*truly the summary of the whole gospel*,” and, much later, St. Thomas Aquinas deemed it “the most perfect of prayers.” *But what does the prayer actually mean?* More specifically, what did *Jesus himself* mean when he taught it to his disciples? And how would they, as first century Jews, have understood its language and imagery?”⁴

I. The Lord’s Prayer (LP) and the New Exodus

- i. Catholic scholar *Brant Pitre* interacts with biblical scholar, *N.T. Wright*. Both scholars treat the LP *eschatologically*, yet in different ways. Whereas Wright contributed the initial discoveries about the LP, Pitre corrects some blind spots in Wright’s work.
- ii. Wright’s premise: LP should be understood as a prayer for *the new Exodus*
 1. The OT prophets boldly announce *the hope that God would save the people of Israel at a future point in time, much as He did in the original exile from Egypt*.
 2. Wright: “The events of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt, the people’s wilderness wandering, and their entry into the promised land were of *enormous importance in the self-understanding and symbolism of all subsequent generations of Israelites*, including Jews of the 2nd Temple period ...
 3. ... When YHWH restored the fortunes of Israel, *it would be like a new Exodus* – a new and greater liberation from an enslavement greater than in Egypt ... *and the Lord’s Prayer can best be seen in this light as well ... from a new Exodus perspective.*”⁵
- iii. Pitre’s contributions:
 1. “... Wright’s suggestion is (basically) correct and that *the ancient Jewish hope for a new Exodus is, in fact, a very important key to understanding what Jesus himself meant when he taught the Lord’s Prayer to his disciples.*”⁶
 2. In this new Exodus, God would do three things: [a] release his people from slavery to sin and death, [b] put an end to their exile from the promised land, and [c] gather them, along with the Gentiles, into a restored kingdom and a new Jerusalem.

Topic #4 – The Lord’s Prayer (Continued)

⁴ This discussion is indebted to the fine work of Dr. Brant Pitre in his essay: “The Lord’s Prayer and the New Exodus” in: *Letter & Spirit 2* (2006).

⁵ Brant Pitre, “The Lord’s Prayer and the New Exodus” in: *Letter & Spirit 2* (2006): p. 70 . Pitre makes key modifications to Wright’s thought, as noted in italics.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 71.

3. Key texts: Isaiah 40–66; Jeremiah 3, 16, 23, 30–31; Ezekiel 20, 36–37; Hosea 2, 11; Micah 4, 7; Zechariah 9–10; Sirach 36.

II. The Lord's Prayer is a "new exodus" prayer ...

- i. ... that God would see the plight of His suffering children and release them from slavery to sin and death.
- ii. ... that the Father would hallow His name by giving His children a new heart and a new spirit and bring them home to a land more glorious than Eden of old.
- iii. ... for the coming messianic kingdom, when both Israel and the Gentiles will pilgrimage together to a new temple and a glorious new Jerusalem.
- iv. ... for the new Manna – the new "bread from heaven" – that the Messiah himself will give to Israel during the messianic age.
- v. ... for the great eschatological Jubilee, when the Messiah will free His people, not just from their "debt" but from the heavier burden of their iniquity.
- vi. ... for divine mercy, for God to spare His people the eschatological *peirasmōs*, the "final Passover" of suffering and death that will proceed the ultimate entry of the new Israel into "the glory of the kingdom" (Cf. CCC 677).

III. Analyzing the Petitions

i. "Our Father ..."

1. Calling God "Father" evokes 'the Exodus' and the awareness of a 'new Exodus'
2. God is almost never addressed as "Father" in a prayer in the OT.⁷ When these passages are carefully examined, they consistently tie the Exodus from Egypt with the prophetic hope for a new Exodus
3. Wright: "Calling God 'Father' not only evokes all kinds of associations of family life and intimacy; more importantly, it speaks to all subsequent generations of God as *the God of the Exodus*, the God who rescues Israel primarily because Israel is God's first-born son." (Wright, "The Lord's Prayer," 140.)
4. Three OT texts, all of which bear strong linguistic resemblances with the LP:
 1. *Isa.* 63.10-17
 2. *Jer.* 3.16-19
 3. *Tobit* 13.1-6

Topic #4 – The Lord's Prayer (Continued)

⁷ Most frequently, Israel is referred to as the sons or children of God, without God explicitly being called "father" (*Deut.* 14:1; *Hos.* 11:1–3; *Wisd.* 5:5). In a few cases, God is explicitly called a "father": either with reference to him as creator (*Deut.* 32:6; *Mal.* 2:10), or by way of analogy (*Ps.* 103:13), or as a protector of orphans (*Psa.* 68:5), or with regard to his special relationship with the king of Israel under the Davidic covenant (*2 Sam.* 7:14; *Psa.* 89:27). Apart from the examples we will discuss below, the only cases of God being addressed as "Father" in prayer in the Old Testament come from the books of *Sirach* and *Wisdom*, where God is called "Father" on a few occasions (see *Wisd.* 14:3; *Sir.* 23:1, 4; 51:10).

5. First, each bears strong *linguistic parallels* with the Lord's Prayer. The most important in this regard is *Isaiah*, who actually addresses God as "our Father" (Isa. 63:16; 64:8)¹²—the same expression we find in the Lord's Prayer: "our Father" *pater hemon* (Matt. 6:9)
6. Second, each of these three texts is describing *the future ingathering of Israel and the Gentiles in a new Exodus*. This is very clear in *Isaiah*, in which the new Exodus is a major theme.⁸
7. Third and finally—and this is significant—in all three texts, *the use of divine "Father" language only occurs in the context of their hope for the new Exodus*.
8. Apart from these texts, neither *Isaiah* nor *Tobit* describes God as "father" *anywhere else*, [though] both books contain numerous other prayers. Such language occurs one other time in *Jeremiah* in *another passage about the new Exodus*:
Jer. 31:7–9 The Lord has saved his people, the remnant of Israel.
"Behold, I will bring them from the north country,
and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth ...
a great company, they shall return here.
 With weeping they shall come,
 and with consolations I will lead them back,
 I will make them walk by brooks of water,
 in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;
for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born son."
9. A significant text that makes explicit the connection between the fatherhood of God and the new Exodus. The reason God will one day bring his people home to the promised land is because he is Israel's *father*, and Israel is his *first-born son*. The echoes of *Exod. 4:22-23* are unmistakable"
And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me"; if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son."
10. The context is critical; it takes place in *Jeremiah's* extended prophecy of:
 1. The coming of the Messiah,
 2. The ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel, and
 3. The inauguration of a "new covenant" that will be greater than the covenant with Moses

Topic #4 – The Lord's Prayer (Continued)

⁸ In this context, the prophet calls upon God to look down "from heaven" and "return" the scattered "tribes" of Israel to the promised land, just as he had done in "the days of old, of Moses his servant" (Isa. 63:10, 17) ... for *Isaiah*, this future Exodus will be tied to the establishment of a restored Temple, a gloriously new Jerusalem, and even a "new heaven and a new earth."¹⁶In other words, the future Exodus will not only be "new," it will be *eschatological*.

11. Conclusion. Taken together, these three OT passages suggest that Jesus' use of "father" language was not incidental or the result of OT custom; rather, *it was a deliberate act that drew on the typological eschatology of the OT and was meant to indicate to his disciples that the time for the inauguration of the new Exodus had come at last.*" (Pitre, 76). Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray for the new Exodus and everything it entailed: the ingathering of the tribes of Israel, the conversion of the Gentiles, the building of a new Jerusalem, and the coming of the Messiah.

ii. "Hallowed be the Name ..."

1. Key OT text: *Ezek. 36.22-28; 37.19-26*. Here, the new Exodus is tied to three key eschatological events:
 1. The restoration of the twelve "tribes" of Israel
 2. The coming of a future Davidic king
 3. The forging of an "everlasting" covenant
2. In light of its OT background, the first petition of the LP is not a plea for some vague "divine action" in history, but a specific request for the *messianic new Exodus*, in which God would restore the twelve tribes of Israel and send the Messiah to establish his everlasting kingdom. This is perhaps why Jesus, in the very next line, turns to the coming of this kingdom. (Pitre, 81)

iii. "The Kingdom Come ..."

1. * Key OT passage: *Mic. 4.1-8*. Difficult to overestimate for its importance under the LP as a new Exodus prayer:
2. * It is the sole occurrence in the OT as a parallel to Jesus' prayer for the "coming" of the "kingdom" (Pitre, p. 82)
3. It reveals, in some sense, that "the coming of the kingdom" and the hope for the new Exodus are one and the same. (Pitre, p. 83)
4. How can a "kingdom" be said to "come"? Quite easily, if *the kingdom in question refers primarily to a people*—namely, the scattered children of God.
5. This is especially true if the people in question are in exile, as the tribes of Israel had been for centuries, spread among the Gentile nations. In this light, the coming of God's kingdom for which Jesus instructs his disciples to pray *means nothing less than the ingathering of Israel and the Gentiles in a new Exodus.* (Pitre, 83-84)
6. Conclusion: In short, Jesus; hope for the coming of the kingdom needs to be understood within the context of *the typological eschatology of the OT* (Pitre, p. 84)

iv. "Give us this day our daily bread ..."

1. Key OT texts:
 1. *Exod. 16.4-5, 13-15, 31*
 2. *Psa. 78-23-25, 29*
 3. *2 Baruch. 29-3-8*
 4. *Exod 16:1-8, 31-34; 29:34*)

Topic #4 – The Lord's Prayer (Continued)

2. OT – Yahweh provides supernatural bread (manna, “*what is it?*”) to His people in the wilderness. There, the Lord provides wafer-like food, “*daily bread*” – and “supernatural bread” from heaven. He also rains down “flesh from heaven” (quail). This “bread of the angels” (*Psa 78:25*) ceases in the Promised Land, and even its taste, like “honey” is a reminder of the future blessing of the Promised Land (*Exod 16:31*; cf. 3:8).
3. NT – Yahweh provides “*bread from heaven*” through Jesus’ miracle of the multiplication of the “bread,” i.e. loaves – and “flesh,” i.e. fish (*John 6:22-40*; par). More deeply, He feeds them the “bread of heaven” in Jesus Christ, who as Son of God is the “bread of life” (*John 6:35-71*).
4. The Eucharist is the *hidden manna* (*Rev 2:17*) which the OT pointed towards in the Last Supper. St. Paul writes, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* (*I Cor 10:16-17*; cf. *Matt 26:20-29*; *Mark 14:17-25*; *Luke 22:14-20*)
5. St. Jerome: The Eucharist is our “*supersubstantial*” (Gk: *epi-ousious*) bread from heaven, for our ‘exodus’ from sin and our long journey to the Promised Land of heaven (CCC 2837).
6. Ancient Jewish eschatology confirms any doubts about this connection between the ‘bread of the LP’ and the ‘new manna’. Many Jews expected that *when the Messiah finally came, he would cause the manna to come down from heaven again*.
7. *2 Bar 29:3-8*: “And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass ... is accomplished, *the Messiah will begin to be revealed* ... Those who are hungry will enjoy themselves and they will see marvels every day ... *And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it* ... because these are they who will have arrived at *the consummation of time*.”
8. Wright concludes: “Manna *was not* needed in Egypt. Nor *would it be needed* in the promised land. *It is the food of inaugurated* eschatology, the food that is needed because the kingdom has already broken in and because it is not yet consummated. The daily provision of manna signals that the Exodus has begun, but also that we are not yet living in the land.” (Wright, *Lord’s Prayer*, 143).
9. Conclusion: If this was the meaning Jesus intended for this petition, then he saw himself as the Jewish Messiah who would once again rain down the new manna from heaven, the “food of inaugurated eschatology.” (Pitre, 87)

Topic #4 – The Lord’s Prayer (Continued)

v. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ...”

1. Key Jewish texts:
 1. *Isa. 61:1-2, 4, 7*
 2. *11QMelchizedek 2.1-9 (DSS)*
2. “Debt” evokes an obvious image of “forgiveness” from the OT: *the year of the Jubilee*, when every Israelite would be set free from debt-slavery and allowed to return to their own land.
3. The year of economic redemption took place every 50 years. It brought the joy of being forgiven one’s debts and being set free from bondage (*Lev. 25:1-55*)
4. Two aspects of the Jubilee year need to be emphasized:
 1. First, the Jubilee not only meant *freedom* from debt but also *a return to one’s land*; it was to be “a redemption of the land” (*Lev. 25:24, 28*)
 - As Wright points out, “The Jubilee looks back to [a time when] Israel had been enslaved in Egypt [when] God had rescued and delivered her.”
 - Just as the Lord had set Israel free from slavery in Egypt and returned them to their land, the promised land, *so too, during the Jubilee year, the people of Israel were to remember their salvation by freeing those enslaved and forgiving those in debt.* (Pitre, 88; cf. Wright, *Lord’s Prayer*, 150)
 2. Second, the Jubilee was not only something that had happened in the past; it was also *a future event* that was directly tied to the inauguration of the new Exodus.
 - The basis for this connection is found in the prophet Isaiah, who describes the Servant of the Lord as one who is “anointed” to proclaim a great *eschatological Jubilee* that would precede the restoration of Israel to the promised land.
 - See: *Isa 61:1-2, 4, 7*
5. Conclusion: By teaching his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of their “debts,” Jesus is ... situating forgiveness within the broader covenantal context of the eschatological Jubilee and the new Exodus ... *a spiritual Jubilee—a deliverance from the debt of sin—that would be inaugurated by the Messiah himself* (Luke 4:16–30) In effect, Jesus is identifying himself as *the long-awaited Messiah* who would inaugurate the eschatological Jubilee, the year of release from iniquity. (Pitre, p. 90)

vi. **“Lead us not into *peirasmos* (‘temptation’) ...”**

1. * The key to understanding this position lies in the dual meaning of *peirasmos*. The traditional meaning means “*temptation* (to sin).” Yet, it may also mean “*testing / trials*.” This is the preferred reading, according to Pitre.
2. Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray that they be spared future “testing” or “trials” in which they will undergo suffering, persecution and death.

Topic #4 – The Lord’s Prayer (Continued)

3. Given the eschatological orientation of the LP, it is likely that the time of tribulation Jesus is referring to is *the period of time preceding the coming of the Kingdom*.
4. Key OT Texts:
 1. *Deut. 7.19*
 2. *Deut. 29.3*
 3. *Deut. 4.27-34*
5. The *peirasmos* that is spoken of by Jesus in Mark 14:38 is not merely the coming period of eschatological tribulation, it is also *an eschatological Passover*, which is intrinsically linked to the prophetic sign Jesus has just enacted in the Last Supper.
6. Hence, the “cup” of which he speaks in Gethsemane and the Upper Room are one and the same: the cup of *peirasmos* and the cup of the paschal tribulation which will bring about the redemption of Israel and, therefore, a new Exodus.
7. In other words, *it is the passion and death of Jesus himself—as the new Passover lamb—that will inaugurate the new Exodus*. (Pitre, p. 94)
8. Conclusion: In short, when the OT background of “*Lead us not into temptation*” is adequately taken into account and is compared with Jesus’ words elsewhere, the LP shows itself to be a *prayer for divine mercy*, a plea for God to spare his people the sufferings of the great *peirasmos* that would precede the coming of the messianic kingdom -- and *the paschal trial that would accompany the new Exodus*.

vii. **Final observations**

The Lord’s Prayer is nothing less than the fulfillment of all of God’s covenant promises to Israel and the world, as contained in the OT and inaugurated by the new Exodus of Jesus own passion, death and resurrection.

St. Augustine: Run through all the words of the holy prayers [in Scripture], and I do not think that you will find anything in them that is not contained and included in the Lord’s Prayer.” (*Letter 130, 12, 22*)

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries

OPENING REFLECTION: POPE BENEDICT XVI

In our day the faithful need to be helped to see more clearly the link between Mary of Nazareth and the faith-filled hearing of God's word. I would encourage scholars as well to study the relationship between Mariology and the theology of the word. This could prove most beneficial both for the spiritual life and for theological and biblical studies. Indeed, what the understanding of the faith has enabled us to know about Mary stands at the heart of Christian truth. The incarnation of the word cannot be conceived apart from the freedom of this young woman who by her assent decisively cooperated with the entrance of the eternal into time. Mary is the image of the Church in attentive hearing of the word of God, which took flesh in her. Mary also symbolizes openness to God and others; an active listening which interiorizes and assimilates, one in which the word becomes a way of life.

- Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* §27

THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES

1. The Annunciation (*Luke 1:26-38*)
2. The Visitation (*Luke 1:39-56*)
3. The Nativity (*Luke 2:1-20*)
4. The Presentation (*Luke 2:22-40*)
5. The Finding in the Temple (*Luke 2:41-52*)

1. The Annunciation (*Luke 1:26-38*)

CCC 484 The Annunciation to Mary inaugurates “*the fullness of time*” (Gal. 4:4), the time of the fulfillment of God's promises and preparations. Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the “*whole fullness of deity*” would dwell “*bodily*” (Col. 2:9). The divine response to her question, “*How can this be, since I know not man?*” was given by the power of the Spirit: “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you.*”

CCC 485 The mission of the Holy Spirit is always conjoined and ordered to that of the Son. The Holy Spirit, “the Lord, the giver of Life,” is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own.

CCC 486 The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is “Christ,” that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples. Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.” (*Acts 10:38*)

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

[PRAYER]

Pope Pius XII, *Mary Our Strength*

*O Virgin, fair as the moon,
delight of the angels and saints in heaven,
grant that we may become like you
and that our souls may receive a ray of your beauty,
which does not decline with the years
but shines forth into eternity.*

*O Mary, sun of heaven,
restore life where there is death
and enlighten spirits where there is darkness.
Turn your countenance to your children
and radiate on us your light and your fervor.*

*O Mary, powerful as an army,
grant victory to our ranks.
We are very weak
and our enemy rages with uttermost conceit.
But under your banner
we are confident of overcoming him.*

*Save us, O Mary,
fair as the moon,
bright as the sun,
awe-inspiring as an army set in battle array
and sustained not by hatred
but by the ardor of love. Amen*

CCC 494 At the announcement that she would give birth to “the Son of the Most High” without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with the obedience of faith, certain that “with God nothing will be impossible”: “*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word.*” Thus, giving her consent to God’s word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God’s grace:

As St. Irenaeus says, “Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert: “*The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith.*” Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary “*the Mother of the living*” and frequently claim: “*Death through Eve, life through Mary.*”

St. Augustine, Reply to Faustus the Manichæan XXVI, 7 (*The Gospel is Truth*)

We believe that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, because it is thus written in the Gospel; we believe that He was crucified and died, because it is thus written in the Gospel; and we believe that both His birth and death were real, because the

Gospel is the truth. Why He chose to suffer all these things in a body taken from a woman is a hidden design known only to him.

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 100 (*Virgin and undefiled*)

[Jesus] became man by the Virgin so that the course which was taken by disobedience in the beginning through the agency of the serpent might be also the very course by which it would be put down. Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent and bore disobedience and death. But *the Virgin Mary* received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her is the Son of God. And she replied '*Be it done unto me according to your word*' [Luke 1:38].

St. Jerome, *Homily 87 (The Perpetual Virginity of Mary)*

Holy Mary, blessed Mary, mother and virgin, virgin before giving birth, virgin after giving birth! I, for my part, marvel how a virgin is born of a virgin, and how, after the birth of a virgin, the mother is a virgin. Would you like to know how he is born of a virgin and, after his nativity, the mother is still a virgin? "The doors were closed, and Jesus entered." (John 20:19) There is no question about that. He who entered through the closed doors was neither a ghost nor a spirit. He was a real man with a real body. Furthermore, what does he say? "Touch me and see.

For a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (*Luke 24:39*) He had flesh and bones, and the doors were closed. How do flesh and bones enter through closed doors? The doors are closed, and he enters, whom we do not see entering. Whence has he entered? Everything is closed up. There is no place through which he may enter. Nevertheless he who has entered is within, and how he entered is not evident. You do not know how his entrance was accomplished, and you attribute it to the power of God. *Attribute to the power of God, then, that he was born of a virgin and the virgin herself after bringing forth was a virgin still.*

Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus (The Immaculate Conception – 12/8/1854)*

When the Fathers and writers of the Church meditated on the fact that the most Blessed Virgin was, in the name and by order of God himself, proclaimed full of grace^[22] by the Angel Gabriel when he announced her most sublime dignity of Mother of God, they thought that this singular and solemn salutation, never heard before, showed that the Mother of God is the seat of all divine graces and is adorned with all gifts of the Holy Spirit. To them Mary is an almost infinite treasury, an inexhaustible abyss of these gifts, to such an extent that she was never subject to the curse and was, together with her Son, the only partaker of perpetual benediction. Hence she was worthy to hear Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, exclaim: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

Raymond Brown, “Annunciations of Birth in Scripture”

BIBLICAL ANNUNCIATIONS OF BIRTH (FIVE STEPS)

1. **The appearance at an angel** of the Lord (or appearance of the Lord)
2. **Fear or prostration of the visionary** confronted by this supernatural presence
3. **The divine message:**
 - a. The visionary is addressed by name
 - b. A qualifying phrase describing the visionary
 - c. The visionary is urged not to be afraid
 - d. A woman is with child or is about to be with child
 - e. She will give birth to the (male) child
 - f. The name by which the child is to be called
 - g. An etymology interpreting the name
 - h. The future accomplishments of the child
4. **An objection by the visionary** as to how this can be or a request for a sign
5. **The giving of a sign** to reassure the visionary⁹

Blessed John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 3 (*Annunciation in Monotheistic Israel*)

§ 3. It may be easy to think of this event *in the setting* of the *history of Israel*, the Chosen People of which Mary is a daughter, but it is also easy to think of it in the context of all the different ways in which humanity has always sought to answer the fundamental and definitive questions which most beset it. Do we not find in the Annunciation at Nazareth the beginning of that definitive answer by which *God himself* “attempts to calm people's hearts”? It is not just a matter here of God's words revealed through the Prophets; rather with this response “the Word is truly made flesh” (cf. *Jn* 1:14). Hence *Mary attains a union with God that exceeds all the expectations of the human spirit*. It even exceeds the expectations of all Israel, in particular the daughters of this Chosen People, who, on the basis of the promise, could hope that one of their number would one day become the mother of the Messiah. Who among them, however, could have imagined that the promised Messiah would be “the Son of the Most High”? On the basis of the Old Testament's monotheistic faith such a thing was difficult to imagine. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit, who “overshadowed” her, was Mary able to accept what is “impossible with men, but not with God” (cf. *Mk* 10: 27)

⁹ Raymond E Brown, “Annunciations in Scripture,” in: *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, New Updated Edition. (New York; London: Yale Univ. Press, 1993),157-58.

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* 28

§ 28. Here I would like to mention Mary's familiarity with the word of God. This is clearly evident in the *Magnificat*. There we see in some sense how she identifies with the word, enters into it; in this marvellous canticle of faith, the Virgin sings the praises of the Lord in his own words: "*The Magnificat – a portrait, so to speak, of her soul – is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the word of God*." Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the word of God; the word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the word of God. Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate".

Furthermore, in looking to the Mother of God, we see how *God's activity in the world always engages our freedom*, because through faith the divine word transforms us. Our apostolic and pastoral work can never be effective unless we learn from Mary how to be shaped by the working of God within us: "devout and loving attention to the figure of Mary as the model and archetype of the Church's faith is of capital importance for bringing about in our day a concrete paradigm shift in the Church's relation with the word, both in prayerful listening and in generous commitment to mission and proclamation".

As we contemplate in the Mother of God a life totally shaped by the word, we realize that we too are called to enter into the mystery of faith, whereby Christ comes to dwell in our lives. Every Christian believer, Saint Ambrose reminds us, in some way interiorly conceives and gives birth to the word of God: even though there is only one Mother of Christ in the flesh, in the faith Christ is the progeny of us all. Thus, what took place for Mary can daily take place in each of us, in the hearing of the word and in the celebration of the sacraments.

[PRAYER]

Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily 11 at Ephesus*

Hail, Mary, you are the most precious creature in the whole world; hail, Mary, uncorrupt dove; hail, Mary, inextinguishable lamp; for from you was born the Sun of justice...through you, every faithful soul achieves salvation. Amen.

2. The Visitation (*Luke 1:39-56*)

CCC 2617 Mary's prayer is revealed to us at the dawning of the fullness of time. Before the incarnation of the Son of God, and before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, her prayer cooperates in a unique way with the Father's plan of loving kindness: at the Annunciation, for Christ's conception; at Pentecost, for the formation of the Church, his Body.⁸⁸ In the faith of his humble handmaid, the Gift of God found the acceptance he had awaited from the beginning of time. She whom the Almighty made "full of grace" responds by offering her whole being: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word." "*Fiat*": this is Christian prayer: to be wholly God's, because he is wholly ours.

CCC 2618 The Gospel reveals to us how *Mary prays and intercedes in faith*. At Cana, the mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast— that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride. It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true "*Mother of all the living*."

CCC 2619 That is why the Canticle of Mary, the *Magnificat* (Latin) or *Megalynei* (Byzantine) is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; *the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new People of God*; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the "poor" whose hope is met by the fulfillment of the promises made to our ancestors, "*to Abraham and to his posterity forever*."

Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke*

He has taken hold of Israel—not of the Israel according to the flesh, who prides himself on the bare name, but of him who is so after the Spirit, in accordance with the true meaning of the appellation. The latter comprises those who look to God, believe in him and obtain through the Son the adoption of sons, according to the Word that was spoken and the promise made to the prophets and patriarchs of old. It has, however, a true application also to the carnal Israel, for many thousands and ten thousands of them believed. But he has remembered his mercy as he promised to Abraham and has accomplished what he said to him: that in his seed shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed (*Gen 22:18*). *This promise was not in the act of fulfillment by the impending birth of our common Savior Christ—who is the seed of Abraham, in whom the Gentiles are blessed. For he took on him the seed of Abraham, according to the apostles' words, and fulfilled the promise made unto the fathers.*

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

[PRAYER]**Sub Tuum Praesidium**

Under your mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God. Do not reject our supplications in necessity, but deliver us from danger, [O you] alone pure and alone blessed.

- From Rylands Papyrus, Egypt (3rd century)

3. The Nativity (Luke 2:1-20)

CCC 422 “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” This is “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God”: God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation—he has sent his own “beloved Son” (*Mk* 1:11; cf. *Lk* 1:55, 68).

CCC 423 We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. He “came from God,” (*John* 13:3) “descended from heaven” (*Jn* 3:13; 6:33), and “came in the flesh” (*I John* 4:2) For “*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father... And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.*”

CCC 525 Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family. Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven’s glory was made manifest. The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.

The angels and shepherds praise him and the magi advance with the star, For you are born for us, Little Child, God eternal!

- *Kontakion* of Romanos the Melodist

CCC 526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become “children of God” we must be “born from above” or “born of God.” Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this “marvelous exchange”:

O marvelous exchange! Man’s Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.

— Liturgy of the Hours, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for January 1st.

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 528 The *Epiphany* is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. *In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation.* The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations (*Mt 2:2; Num 24:17–19; Rev 22:16*). *Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning toward the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament (Jn 4:22; Mt 2:4–6).* The Epiphany shows that “the full number of the nations” now takes its “place in the family of the patriarchs,” and acquires *Israelitica dignitas*^o (are made “worthy of the heritage of Israel”).

CCC 530 The *flight into Egypt* and the massacre of the innocents (*Mt 2:13–18*) make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light: “*He came to his own home, and his own people received him not*” (*John 1:11*) *Christ’s whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him. Jesus’ departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God’s people.*

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III. Q XXVIII.a.2
(*Whether Christ’s Mother was a virgin in His birth?*)

I answer that, Without any doubt whatever we must assert that the Mother of Christ was a virgin even in His Birth: for the prophet says not only: *Behold a virgin shall conceive*, but adds: *and shall bear a son*. This indeed was befitting for three reasons.

First, because this was in keeping with a property of Him whose Birth is in question, for He is the Word of God. For the word is not only conceived in the mind without corruption, but also proceeds from the mind without corruption. Wherefore in order to show that body to be the body of the very Word of God, it was fitting that it should be born of a virgin incorrupt. Whence in the sermon of the Council of Ephesus (quoted above) we read: *Whosoever brings forth mere flesh, ceases to be a virgin. But since she gave birth to the Word made flesh, God safeguarded her virginity so as to manifest His Word, by which Word He thus manifested Himself: for neither does our word, when brought forth, corrupt the mind; nor does God, the substantial Word, deigning to be born, destroy virginity.*

Secondly, this is fitting as regards the effect of Christ’s Incarnation: since He came for this purpose, that He might take away our corruption. Wherefore it is unfitting that in His Birth He should corrupt His Mother’s virginity. Thus Augustine says in a sermon on the Nativity of Our Lord: *It was not right that He Who came to heal corruption, should by His advent violate integrity.*

Thirdly, it was fitting that He Who commanded us to honour our father and mother should not in His Birth lessen the honour due to His Mother.

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

St. Athanasius, *Homily of the Papyrus of Turin*, 71:216 (*Ark of the True Manna*)

¹⁰ St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini* 1–3, 5; PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; *Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third reading.

O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? *You are greater than them all O Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides.*

St. Jerome *Homilies on the Psalms* 44 (*The Lord of Creation Has No Place to Be Born*)

The Lord is born on earth, and he does not have even a cell in which to be born, for there was no room for him in the inn. The entire human race had a place, and the Lord about to be born on earth had none. He found no room among men. *He found no room in Plato, none in Aristotle, but in a manger, among beasts of burden and brute animals, and among the simple, too, and the innocent.* For that reason the Lord says in the Gospel: “The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (*Luke 9:58*)

St. Gregory the Great: *Homilies on the Gospels* 8.2 (*Peace Between Men & Angels*)

Before the Redeemer was born in the flesh, there was discord between us and the angels, from whose brightness and holy perfection we were separated, in punishment first of original sin and then because of our daily offences. Because through sin we had become strangers to God, the angels as God’s subjects cut us off from their fellowship. *But since we have now acknowledged our King, the angels receive us as fellow citizens. Because the King of heaven has taken unto himself the flesh of our earth, the angels from their heavenly heights no longer look down upon our infirmity.* Now they are at peace with us, putting away the remembrance of the ancient discord. Now they honor us as friends, whom before they considered to be weak and despised.

[PRAYER]

St. Ephrem the Syrian

Hail, most tranquil haven, and most ardently longed for rescuer of the tempest-tossed from billows and storms. Hail, succor of those in danger. Hail, resurrection of our first father Adam. Hail, sweet liberty. Hail, parent of all. Hail, fountain of grace, and of all the solace. Hail, refuge and hospice of sinners. Hail, mercy-seat of the afflicted. Hail, place of sanctuary in Jerusalem. Hail, most glorious throne of our Creator. Hail, most illustrious splendor of the age. Hail, hope of all the good who suffer under affliction. Hail, sweet solace and protection of the converted. Hail, of men and women alike Queen and Patroness. Hail, best mediatress between God and man. *Amen.*

4. The Presentation (*Luke 2:22-40*)

CCC 527 Jesus' *circumcision*, on the eighth day after his birth (Cf. *Lk 2:21*), is the sign of his incorporation into Abraham's descendants, into the people of the covenant. It is the sign of his submission to the Law (cf. *Gal. 4:4*) and his deputation to Israel's worship, in which he will participate throughout his life. This sign prefigures that "circumcision of Christ" which is Baptism (Cf. *Col 2:11-13*).

CCC 529 The *presentation of Jesus in the temple* shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord (Cf. *Lk 2:22-39; Ex 13:2, 12-13*). [With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its encounter with the Savior—the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition.](#) Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the "*light to the nations*" and the "*glory of Israel*," but also "*a sign that is spoken against*." The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ's perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had "prepared in the presence of all peoples."

St. Jerome, *Against the Pelagians 2.4*

(The Closed Womb Jesus Opens is the East Door of the Jerusalem Temple)

[All heretics have gone astray by not understanding the mystery of his nativity.](#)

The statement "*he who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord*" is more applicable to the special nativity of the Savior than to that of all men, for Christ alone opened the closed doors of the womb of virginity, which nevertheless remained permanently closed. This is the closed east door, through which only the high priest enters and leaves, and nevertheless it is always closed.

St. John of Damascus, *Orthodox Faith 4.14*

(The Sword that Passes Through Mary is Her Suffering and Grief)

However, this blessed one, who had been found worthy of gifts surpassing nature, did at the time of the passion suffer the pangs which she had escaped at childbirth. When she saw him put to death as a criminal—the man she knew to be God when she gave birth to him—her heart was torn from maternal compassion and she was rent by her thoughts as by a sword. [This is the meaning of "and a sword will pierce through your own soul."](#) *But her grief gave way to the joy of the resurrection, the resurrection which proclaimed him to be God who had died in the flesh.*

Venerable Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels 1.18*

(Simeon & Anna Represent Both Genders Awaiting Redemption)

Simeon and Anna, a man and a woman of advanced age, greeted the Lord with the devoted services of their professions of faith. As they saw him, he was small in body, but they understood him to be great in his divinity. Figuratively speaking, this denotes the synagogue, the Jewish people, who, wearied by the long awaiting of his incarnation, were ready with both their arms (their pious actions) and their voices (their unfeigned faith) to exalt and magnify him as soon as he came. They were ready to acclaim him and say, "*Direct me in your truth and teach me, for you are my saving God, and for you I have waited all the day.*" (*Psa. 25:5*) What needs to be mentioned, too, is that deservedly both sexes hurried to meet him, offering congratulations, *since he appeared as the Redeemer of both.*

Topic #5 – The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

SPECIAL EXCURSUS: ADDITIONAL EXEGESIS ON THE PRESENTATION SCENE

1. Introductory remarks:
 - a. Watch for Luke's OT motifs yet again:
 - i. The Simeon account certainly owes something to the OT account of the bringing of the child Samuel to Eli at the temple (see esp. 1 Sam 1:24–28; 2:20, 21, 26)
 - ii. Echoes of Isaiah in the *Nunc Dimittis* and vv 25 and 38.
 - b. In Luke's narration of the *Benedictus* (1:67–80), we met a pair of two male / female “supporting actors” - Zechariah + Elizabeth – and the mystery of the miraculous birth announcement of JBap for God's saving purposes ... now, in 2:22–40, we meet another pair of male / female supporting actors, Simeon + Anna.
 - c. Both in their own way perceive that the hopes of Israel ... and the hopes of the world, are before them in the infant Jesus.
 - d. A frame is completed - the earlier narrative of John's infancy *moves out from the temple*, the story of Jesus' infancy *moves in towards the temple* ...
 - e. Conformity to the Jewish law, noted in the case of John, achieves a measure of prominence in the case of Jesus.
2. Exegetical details
 - a. **V 22** *And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)*
 - i. Some context: The ritual purification of a woman after childbirth took place in the temple in Jerusalem forty days (eighty in the case of a female child) after the birth. Prior to the purification, the mother was not free to touch anything sacred or to enter the temple (cf. *Lev* 12:1–8).
 - ii. *The Book of Leviticus* (ch 12) required Jewish women, after giving birth, should go to the temple 40 days after, for the purposes of “ritual purification” – offering two sacrifices in the temple.
 - iii. * In the case of a firstborn son there was also a requirement that he be acknowledged as belonging to the Lord in a special way (*Exod* 13:2, 12, 15).
 - iv. In fact, the child had to be “bought back” by the payment of a fee of five shekels (*Num* 18:15–16). Technically, the payment could be made at a local synagogue, but Nehemiah ch 10 states the ideal place was in the Temple.)
 - v. When the parents could go up to Jerusalem, the purification (of the mother) and the presentation of the child would be combined, i.e. done together. To use two turtledoves or young pigeons for the sacrifice

instead of the usual lamb and one turtledove or pigeon was actually a concession for poor folk (Lev 12:8)

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

- vi. So – this is the context – a double ceremony for Mary and Jesus. I.e. The purification is the occasion for bringing Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as in v 21 the circumcision was the occasion for the naming.
- b. **VV 25 – 32** ²⁵ *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; ³⁰ for mine eyes have seen thy salvation ³¹ which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."*
- c. **V 26** Simeon is introduced as a man of exemplary Jewish piety, like Zechariah and Elizabeth. Beyond them, **his life is said to have been already firmly focused on the promised future intervention of God on behalf of his people** (cf. esp. *Isa* 40:1!!)
- d. Simeon is a man on whom the Spirit of God rests and to whom the Spirit has revealed that the Christ would be born in his lifetime.
- e. When the holy family is brought to the temple by the need to fulfill the law, Simeon is brought into the temple by an impulse of the Spirit. And so it is divinely conspired that they should meet together. With a spiritual sight born of his closeness to God, Simeon at once recognizes the child.
- f. **V 27** Having made quite clear in chap. 1 the nature of Jesus' origin, Luke has no problem with using the word "parents" (τοὺς γονεῖς) here of Mary and Joseph.
- g. **V 28** Now Simeon attends to the parents. It is likely that the theme of acting in accord with the law is here continued, and if such is the case, Simeon receives the child as the **priestly representative** of God
- h. **V 29** Simeon's words are addressed to God and are his witness to the fulfillment of what had been revealed to him by the Spirit (v 26). In priestly fashion he blesses them (as Eli blessed Samuel's parents in 1 Sam 2:20).
*** Here, its v impt to see that Luke is continuing parallels he developed earlier in the Magnificat (Hannah / Mary, Eli / Simeon, Samuel / Jesus!)
- i. **v 29**, "now," marks the decisive turning point in Simeon's life. This patient slave (δοῦλος) is now being released by his Master from his duty as watchman
- j. **V 30 -35** Next Simeon speaks especially to Mary. A somber tone replaces the earlier joy ... *Jesus, the bringer of salvation, is also the bringer of tragic division in Israel.*
- k. Placed like a rock (based on *Isa* 8:14–15), he may be stumbled over, or one may raise oneself up upon this rock. This possibility is again referred to with the imagery of a sign opposed. The sign signals salvation, but what it signals may—and will—be resisted.

- l. **V 32** Echoes language used for the Servant of the Lord in *Isa* 42:6 and 49:6
 - i. “*Glory for ... Israel,*” but “*light for revelation to the Gentiles*” recognizes that the Gentiles came to the light from pagan darkness while Israel *was already God’s People and by God’s gracious commitment destined for glory.*

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

- ii. The setting of Jews & Gentiles in parallel corresponds to the pattern Luke develops in *Acts* where Jews & Gentiles are seen as parallel beneficiaries of that salvation which is offered in the name of Jesus (*Acts* 9:15;
- m. **V 36-38** Introduction of Anna, resumes the positive tme. As the Spirit upon Simeon provided the basis for the subsequent action in v 25, so here Anna is labeled as prophetess in preparation for her inspired identification of the child (v 38). In the OT Miriam, Deborah, etc. are called prophetesses (*Exod* 15:20; *Judg* 4:4).
- n. Also- The balancing of a male and female figure occurs with Zechariah and Mary (1:5-38) and elsewhere in Luke’s Gospel (e.g., 4:25-27; 7:36-50; etc.)

Blessed John Paul II, *General Audience* (Wed. Jan. 8, 1997)

§ 3. At the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Mary serves the mystery of Redemption under Christ and with Christ: indeed he has the principal role in salvation and must be ransomed by a ritual offering. Mary is joined to the sacrifice of her Son by the sword that will pierce her soul.

§ 4. *The primacy of Christ does not rule out but supports and demands the proper, irreplaceable role of woman.* By involving his mother in his own sacrifice, Christ wants to reveal its deep human roots and to show us an anticipation of the priestly offering of the cross. The divine intention to call for the specific involvement of woman in the work of Redemption can be seen by the fact that Simeon’s prophecy is addressed to Mary alone, although Joseph also took part in the offering rite.

The conclusion of the episode of Jesus’ presentation in the temple seems to confirm the meaning and value of the feminine presence in the economy of salvation. *The meeting with a woman, Anna, brings to a close these special moments when the Old Testament as it were is handed over to the New.*

Like Simeon, this woman has no special status among the chosen people, but her life seems to have a lofty value in God’s eyes. St Luke calls her a “prophetess”, probably because many consulted her for her gift of discernment and the holy life she led under the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord.

Anna is advanced in age, being 84 years old, and has long been a widow. Totally consecrated to God, “she never left the temple, serving God day and night with fasting and prayer” (cf. *Lk* 2:37). She represents those who, having intensely lived in expectation of the Messiah, are able to accept the fulfilment of the promise with joyous exultation. The Evangelist mentions that “coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God” (2:38).

Staying constantly in the temple, she could, perhaps more easily than Simeon, meet Jesus at the end *of a life dedicated to the Lord and enriched by listening to the Word and by prayer.*

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

At the dawn of Redemption, we can glimpse in the prophetess Anna all women who, with holiness of life and in prayerful expectation, are ready to accept Christ's presence and to praise God every day for the marvels wrought by his everlasting mercy.

§5. Chosen to meet the Child, Simeon and Anna have a deep experience of sharing the joy of Jesus' presence with Mary and Joseph *and spreading it where they live.* Anna in particular shows wonderful zeal in speaking about Jesus, thus witnessing to her simple and generous faith. This faith prepares others to accept the Messiah in their lives. Luke's expression, "she ... spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38), seems to credit her as a symbol of the women who, dedicated to spreading the Gospel, will arouse and nourish the hope of salvation.

[PRAYER]

St. Athanasius, *Orat. In Deip. Annuntiat, 13, 14.*

Be mindful of us, most holy Virgin, who after childbirth didst remain virgin; and grant to us for these small words great gifts from the riches of thy graces, O thou full of grace. Accept them as though they were true and adequate praises in thy honor; and if there is in them any virtue and any praise, we offer them as a hymn from ourselves and from all creatures to thee, full of grace, *Lady, Queen, Mistress, Mother of God, and Ark of sanctification.* Amen.

5. The Finding in the Temple (*Luke 2:41-52*)

CCC 531 During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: *a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor.* His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God (*Gal.4:4*), a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (*Lk 2:51-52*).

CCC 532 Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "Not my will" (*Lk 22:42*). *The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed* (*Rom. 5:19*).

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 533 The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life:

The home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus—the school of the Gospel. First, then, a lesson of silence. May esteem for *silence*, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us ... [A lesson on family life](#). May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character ... [A lesson of work](#). Nazareth, home of the “Carpenter’s Son,” in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work.... To conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern, their brother who is God. (Pope Paul VI at Nazareth, Jan 5, 1964)

CCC 534 The *finding of Jesus in the temple* is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus (*Luke 2:41-52*). Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s work?” (*Luke 2:49*) Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary “*kept all these things in her heart*” during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life.

CCC 1115 Jesus’ words and actions *during his hidden life and public ministry were already salvific, for they anticipated the power of his Paschal mystery*. They announced and prepared what he was going to give the Church when all was accomplished. The mysteries of Christ’s life are the foundations of what he would henceforth dispense in the sacraments, through the ministers of his Church, for “what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries.”

[PRAYER]

Pope Pius XII, *Vergine benedicta*

Blessed Virgin who, under the title of Repose, reminds us of the succoring pity with which your maternal heart is open to your children, hear our prayer!

Through your powerful intercession, O Mary, may minds and hearts find repose in abandoning themselves to the Will of the Heavenly Father, in the consciousness of their frailty, in faith in divine promises, in the hope of eternal blessings, and in adhering lovingly to your Crucified Jesus who has made our crosses his own.

If we are protected by you, O Mary, calm amid earthly perturbation will not be an empty word. It will be repose for the strong, watchful against hostile forces; repose for the pure, away from worldly corruption. And as through you we shall have had peace in this life, so, at the end of our pilgrimage in time, we shall enjoy peace for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

SPECIAL EXCURSUS: ADDITIONAL EXEGESIS ON THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

1. **V 41-42** The family trip year by year may echo that of Samuel's parents (1 Sam 1:3, 7, 21; 2:19). A Samuel connection is clear in v 52. Since no special attention is drawn in vv 42-43 to Jesus' presence on the occasion of this Passover trip when he is twelve years old (his presence only becomes definite when we are told that he stayed behind in Jerusalem), it is natural to assume that Jesus accompanied his parents from year to year.
2. At 12 years of age Jesus would in Jewish terms be beginning to make the transition into adult responsibility under the law (some rabbis considered this the age at which vows became binding, parental punishment could become more severe, and fasting could be expected to be sustained for a whole day), but more often the onset of responsibilities is linked with the 13th birthday
3. **V 43** Passover (with Unleavened Bread) was an eight-day celebration (Lev 23:5-6). Though pilgrims did not necessarily need to stay for the full duration ... Mary and Joseph will have done so.
4. **V 44** *sunodia* "caravan"/"traveling-party," For Jewish festivals, the number of travelers would make possible a Nazareth traveling-party, and this would reduce the demands on the individual of planning and executing such a trip. The imperfect verb "they were looking for," may suggest that the parents spent the day looking for him.
5. **V 47 all who heard were astonished.** . God's wisdom and grace (v 40) already make an impact in these early words of Jesus
6. **V 48** The parents' amazement has a different cause from that in v 47. The growing apprehension about the boy's safety and well-being that the 3-day separation has produced in the parents stands in sharpest contrast to Jesus' total preoccupation with other matters. It is a little surprising that Mary should speak but she makes it clear that she speaks for both parents, and at a literary level, only with Mary as speaker can we get the pairing of "your father" and my Father"
7. **V 49** – Difficult phrase to translate: "*How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*" Several possibilities:
 - a. To be in the house of my father (temple)
 - b. To be in the affairs of my father
 - c. Among those who belong to my father
 - d. ** *dei* (it is necessary – remember Luke's infinitive) it is necessary that I should be in the house of my father

Also - the story presupposes that Mary and Joseph already have a basis upon which some knowledge of Jesus' unique identity might be expected of them). To Jesus surprise, this was not so obvious to Mary and Joseph.

Nevertheless – and this should be stressed ...Jesus had not betrayed his sonship. In fact he had had no intention of dishonoring **either** of his 'sonships.' Here, however, in the encounter with his distressed parents, this maturing child has set before him

something of the complexity of the relationship between his identity as Son of God and as son in the family of Joseph

Topic #5 The Joyful Mysteries (Continued)

Jesus was genuinely surprised, and no doubt grieved that his parents had experienced such distress. He had thought that they would have realized that if he was not with them he would be in the temple (in the house of God, his Father).

For Jesus that seemed to follow naturally from the unique relationship with God which in his case superimposed itself upon his membership in a human family. Jesus had not betrayed his sonship. In fact he had had no intention of dishonoring either of his sonships (v 48: “your father”; v 49: “my Father”).

The human parents thought in terms of filial insubordination only because they had failed to reckon adequately with Jesus’ unique identity (cf. 1:32, 35). Nevertheless, this unexpected turn of events set before this maturing child something of the complexity of the relationship between his identity as Son of God and as son in the family of Joseph.

8. **V 51 For a third time ... Mary stores it all up and sought to puzzle it all through.** As prophecy receives its definitive exposition in fulfillment, so all Mary’s experiences in this text will attain their full significance only when the events reaching to Pentecost run their course. Mary’s involvement will bridge these early beginnings, the ministry of Jesus and the early life of the post-resurrection church (Act 1:14).
9. **V 52** Jesus’ unique identity will later be given full expression in his adult ministry. In between, however, there is to be growth in wisdom and in stature and in the capacity to execute that which is pleasing both to God and on the human level...
10. *Some stumble here unnecessarily ... at what might be taken to undermine the conviction that Jesus was at all times and in all respects utterly without flaw.* Luke speaks, rather, out of the conviction that the human maturing process even in perfect form involves not only growth in size but also development in wisdom and in the capacity to execute that which is pleasing both to God and to one’s fellows.

[PRAYER]

Pope Pius XII, *Vergine benedicta*

Blessed Virgin who, under the title of Repose, reminds us of the succoring pity with which your maternal heart is open to your children, hear our prayer!

Through your powerful intercession, O Mary, may minds and hearts find repose in abandoning themselves to the Will of the Heavenly Father, in the consciousness of their frailty, in faith in divine promises, in the hope of eternal blessings, and in adhering lovingly to your Crucified Jesus who has made our crosses his own.

If we are protected by you, O Mary, calm amid earthly perturbation will not be an empty word. It will be repose for the strong, watchful against hostile forces;

repose for the pure, away from worldly corruption. And as through you we shall have had peace in this life, so, at the end of our pilgrimage in time, we shall enjoy peace for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries

OPENING REFLECTION

It is the humble Virgin of Nazareth who became mother of “the Prince of Peace,” of him who was born under the sign of peace, and who proclaimed to the whole world: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”(6) The Gospel teaches us that Mary is sensitive to the needs of men. At Cana, she did not hesitate to intervene, to the joy of the villagers invited to a wedding feast. How, then, would she not intervene in favor of peace, that precious possession, if we only pray to her with a sincere heart?

- Pope Paul VI Apostolic Exhortation *Recurrens Mensis* (“Praying the Rosary for Peace,” 1969)

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES

1. The Baptism in the Jordan (*Matt. 3:13-17 / Mark 1:9-11 / Luke 3:21-22*)
2. The Wedding Feast at Cana (*John 2:1-11*)
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom (*Matt. 6:25-27 / Mark 1:14 / Luke 15:11-24*)
4. The Transfiguration (*Matt. 17:1-8*)
5. The Institution of the Eucharist (*Luke 22:15-16*)

1. The Baptism in the Jordan

(Matt. 3:13-17 / Mark 1:9-11 / Luke 3:21-22)

Mark 1:9-11 ⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; ¹¹ and a voice came from heaven, “*Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.*”

Matt. 3:13-17 ¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; ¹⁷ and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.*”

Luke 3:21-22 ²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, “*Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased.*”

CCC 535 Jesus’ public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan. John preaches “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Luke 3:3) A crowd of sinners—tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes—come to be baptized by him. “Then Jesus appears.” The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism.

Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, “This is my beloved Son.” This is the manifestation (“Epiphany”) of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 536 The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God’s suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already “*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29) Already he is anticipating the “baptism” of his bloody death (Mark 10:38). Already he is coming to “fulfill all righteousness,” that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father’s will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. The Father’s voice responds to the Son’s acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to “rest on him.” Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism “the heavens were opened”—*the heavens that Adam’s sin had closed—and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.*

CCC 537 Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father’s beloved son in the Son and “*walk in newness of life*”:

Let us be buried with Christ by Baptism to rise with him; let us go down with him to be raised with him; and let us rise with him to be glorified with him. (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio*. 40, 9)

Everything that happened to Christ lets us know that, after the bath of water, the Holy Spirit swoops down upon us from high heaven and that, adopted by the Father’s voice, we become sons of God. (St. Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matth.* 2, 5)

CCC 565 From the beginning of his public life, at his baptism, Jesus is the “Servant,” wholly consecrated to the redemptive work that he will accomplish by *the “baptism” of his Passion.*

CCC 1225 *In his Passover, Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a “Baptism” with which he had to be baptized. The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life (John 19:34).* From then on, it is possible “to be born of water and the Spirit” in order to enter the Kingdom of God. See where you are baptized, see where Baptism comes from, if not from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved. (St. Ambrose, *De sacr.* 2, 2, 6)

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.Q XXXIX.ad.5.

(Whether the heavens should have been opened unto Christ at his baptism?)

I answer that, Christ wished to be baptized in order to consecrate the baptism wherewith we were to be baptized ... Now after baptism man needs to pray continually, in order to enter heaven: for though sins are remitted through baptism, there still remain the fomes of sin assailing us from within, and the world and the devils assailing us from without. And therefore it is said pointedly (*Luke 3:21*) that *Jesus*

being baptized and praying, heaven was opened: because, to wit, the faithful after baptism stand in need of prayer—or else, that we may be led to understand that the very fact ...

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[Continued] ...through baptism heaven is opened to believers is in virtue of the prayer of Christ. Hence it is said pointedly (*Matthew 3:16*) that *heaven was opened to Him*—that is, *to all for His sake*. Thus, for example, the Emperor might say to one asking a favour for another: *Behold, I grant this favour, not to him, but to thee*—that is, *to him for thy sake*.

St. Hilary, On Matthew 2.5 (*The Waters of Baptism Sanctified*)

In Jesus Christ we behold a complete man. Thus in obedience to the Holy Spirit the body he assumed fulfilled in him every sacrament of our salvation. He came therefore to John, born of a woman, bound to the law and made flesh through the Word. Therefore there was no need for him to be baptized, because it was said of him: “He committed no sin.” (1 Pet 2:22) And where there is no sin, the remission of it is superfluous. *It was not because Christ had a need that he took a body and a name from our creation. He had no need for baptism. Rather, through him the cleansing act was sanctified to become the waters of our immersion.*

St. Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 1.3.13 (*Why Jesus Accepted John’s Baptism*)

For three reasons the Savior accepted baptism from John. **First**, because he was born a man, that he might fulfill all justice and humility of the law. **Second**, that by his baptism he might confirm John’s baptism. And **third**, that by sanctifying the waters of the Jordan through the descent of the dove, he might show the Holy Spirit’s advent in the baptism of believers.

St. Augustine Sermon 2.1–2 (*Jesus’ Baptism an Image of the Holy Trinity*)

Here then we have the Trinity presented in a clear way: *the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Holy Spirit in the dove*. This only needs to be barely mentioned, for it is so obvious for anyone to see. Here the recognition of the Trinity is conveyed to us so plainly that it hardly leaves any room for doubt or hesitation. The Lord Christ himself, who comes in the form of a servant to John, is undoubtedly the Son, for here no one can mistake him for either the Father or the Holy Spirit. It is the Son who comes. And who could have any doubt about the identity of the dove? The Gospel itself most plainly testifies: “*The Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.*”

So also there can be no doubt whose voice it is who speaks so personally: “You are my beloved Son.” *So we have the Trinity distinguished* ... Here are the three persons of the Trinity distinguished: When Jesus came to the river, he came from one place to another. The dove descended from heaven to earth, from one place to another. The very voice of the Father sounded neither from the earth nor from the water but from heaven. These three are as it were distinguished in places, in offices and in works.

But one may say to me, “*Show me instead the inseparability of the triune God. Remember you who are speaking are a Catholic, and to Catholics are you speaking.*” For thus does our faith teach, that is, the true, the right Catholic faith, gathered not by the opinion of private judgment but by the witness of the Scriptures, not subject to the fluctuations of heretical rashness but grounded in apostolic truth. This we know, this we believe ...

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[Continued] ... This, though we do not see it with our eyes nor as yet with the heart, so long as we are being purified by faith, *yet by this faith we most firmly and rightly maintain the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a Trinity—inseparably one God, not three gods. But yet one God in such a way that the Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Son, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son but the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. This ineffable Divinity, abiding ever in itself, making all things new, creating, creating anew, sending, recalling, judging, delivering, this Trinity, I say, we know to be at once indescribable and inseparable.*

[From] John P. Meier, “The Meaning of Jesus’ Baptism”¹¹

If Jesus was actually baptized by John in the Jordan River somewhere around the beginning of A.D. 28, what does that mean for our understanding of Jesus? Can we know what his baptism meant to Jesus himself? Some would think the answers to these questions simple. For example, we need only go to the account of the theophany following the baptism (*Mark* 1:10–11) to find out how Jesus understood his baptism. But this approach is hopelessly naive, even if we adopt the ostensibly “critical” position that the theophany is a mythological representation of some psychological experience Jesus had at the time of his baptism. Such a psychological interpretation was beloved of the “liberal lives” of Jesus and still is found today. The problem is that this approach completely ignores the fact that we have in the narrative of the theophany, as it now stands, a Christian “midrash,” a learned use of various OT texts to present the reader of the Gospel with an initial interpretation of who Jesus is. The various echoes of OT texts, interpreted in the light of the developing christology of the early church, are easily listed in summary form:

(1) First of all, even before we come to OT prophecies, there is the question of the fulfillment of NT prophecy, namely of what the Baptist has just said. The descent of the spirit shows that Jesus is the one promised by John, the one who will baptize with the spirit (*Mark* 1:8), hence the one on whom the spirit rests (with possible royal and prophetic allusions from *Isa* 11:2; 61:1). Jesus, being the fulfillment of everything John promised, is obviously superior to John. The OT texts then serve to explain in detail why Jesus is superior to John.

(2) As for fulfillment of OT prophecies: the heavenly voice proclaims Jesus to be God’s Son in the words of *Psa* 2:7, the words Yahweh addresses to the Davidic king on the day of his enthronement in Jerusalem. The context of *Psa* 2 (one of the royal psalms) and the symbolic “anointing” with the spirit imply that this Son of God is also the promised royal Davidic Messiah. One should not miss the emphasis in “you are my Son,” i.e., you, not John.

(3) The further designation of the Son as “the beloved” (*ho agapētos*) may be meant to conjure up the figure of Isaac, the “only beloved son” of Abraham. From this possible allusion various exegetes draw further conclusions about a reference to the sacrifice of

¹¹ From: John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Volume Two, Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 106-16.

Isaac in Genesis 22 (*ʾāqēdat yiśhāq*), meant to foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. But such an allusion is by no means certain. Whether or not there is such a reference to Isaac, one point is clear: Jesus, not John, is *the* beloved of the Father.

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

(4) The final words of the heavenly voice, “in you I am well pleased,” come from Isa 42:1: “*Here is my servant ... with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit.*” The Son of God-Messiah is thus also the servant of Yahweh. In (Deutero-) Isaiah, this mysterious servant is empowered by God’s spirit to re-establish the covenant-community of Israel by his justice, his meekness, his teaching, his prophetic ministry, and (if one may look as far ahead as Isa 52:13–53:12) his sacrificial death for sinners. *The re-gathering of a scattered Israel, a task some might have seen fulfilled in John, is rather the work of the servant in whom Yahweh is truly pleased, Jesus.*

(5) The setting of the bank of a river, the splitting open of the heavens, and a symbolic vision calling an individual to a prophetic ministry addressed to a sinful Israel all recall the inaugural vision of Ezekiel by the river Chebar in Babylon (Ezek 1:1). No such detailed inaugural vision and call to prophecy are recounted in the Gospels’ description of the adult John.

(6) The splitting open of the heavens that God might descend in an eschatological theophany may also carry overtones of Isa 63:19: “*Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down!*” The wider context of Isaiah 63 ties in well with themes suggested by the story of Jesus’ baptism: redemption by passing through water, exodus from Egypt, Moses the servant, God granting his holy spirit to the people Israel. Especially relevant are verses like 63:11: “And he [Israel] remembered the days of old, Moses [and] his people. Where is he [namely, God] who brought up from the sea the shepherd [namely, Moses] of his flock? Where is he who placed in their midst his holy spirit?”

The overall impression given by these numerous OT texts, all converging on the initial event of Jesus’ public life, is that the fulfillment of all prophecy is at hand.

To sum up, then, the message of the theophany: the Son of God, the royal Davidic Messiah, is anointed with God’s spirit to be the final prophet and servant of the Lord sent to a sinful people. On those Israelites who heed him he will pour out this spirit of the end time, just as it has been poured out on him. Every point in this rich synthesis of OT prophecy and fulfillment reinforces a not-so-subliminal message: the person of whom all these things are true is obviously superior to John the Baptist, even though John confers the baptism that provides the setting of and prelude to the theophany. Not accidentally, this early Christian composition stresses that it is the theophany, and not John’s baptism by itself, that reveals the truth about Jesus.

2. The Wedding Feast at Cana

(John 2:1-11)

¹ On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; ² Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. ³ When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴ And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵ His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶ Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

CCC 1335 The miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, when the Lord says the blessing, breaks and distributes the loaves through his disciples to feed the multitude, prefigure the superabundance of this unique bread of his Eucharist. *The sign of water turned into wine at Cana already announces the Hour of Jesus’ glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father’s kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ.*

CCC 1613 On the threshold of his public life Jesus performs his first sign—at his mother’s request—during a wedding feast. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus’ presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it *the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ’s presence.*

CCC 2618 The Gospel reveals to us how Mary prays and intercedes in faith. *At Cana, the mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast—that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride.* It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true “Mother of all the living.”

Blessed John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (§21-24)

§ 21. From this point of view, particularly eloquent is the passage in the Gospel of John which presents Mary at the wedding feast of Cana. She appears there as the Mother of Jesus at the beginning of his public life: “*There was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples*” (Jn. 2:1-2). From the text it appears that Jesus and his disciples were invited together with Mary, as if by reason of her presence at the celebration: the Son seems to have been invited because of his mother. We are familiar with the sequence of events which resulted from that invitation, that “beginning of the signs” wrought by Jesus—the water changed into wine—

which prompts the Evangelist to say that Jesus "manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (Jn. 2:11) ...

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[Continued] 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. We read: "*When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come'*" (Jn. 2:3-4). In John's Gospel that "hour" means the time appointed by the Father when the Son accomplishes his task and is to be glorified (cf. Jn. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; 19:27). Even though Jesus' reply to his mother sounds like a refusal (especially if we consider the blunt statement "My hour has not yet come" rather than the question), Mary nevertheless turns to the servants and says to them: "*Do whatever he tells you*" (Jn. 2:5). Then Jesus orders the servants to fill the stone jars with water, and the water becomes wine, better than the wine which has previously been served to the wedding guests.

What deep understanding existed between Jesus and his mother? How can we probe the mystery of their intimate spiritual union? But the fact speaks for itself. It is certain that that event already quite clearly outlines the new dimension, the new meaning of Mary's motherhood. Her motherhood has a significance which is not exclusively contained in the words of Jesus and in the various episodes reported by the Synoptics (*Lk.* 11:27-28; 8:19-21; *Mt.* 12:46-50; *Mk.* 3:31-35). In these texts Jesus means above all to contrast the motherhood resulting from the fact of birth with what this "motherhood" ("brotherhood") is to be in the dimension of the Kingdom of God, in the salvific radius of God's fatherhood. In John's text on the other hand, the description of the Cana event 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, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs. At Cana in Galilee there is shown only one concrete aspect of human need, apparently a small one of little importance (*They have no wine*). But it has a symbolic value: this coming to the aid of human needs means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ's messianic mission and salvific power.

Thus there is a mediation: *Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings*. She puts herself "in the middle," that is to say she acts as a *mediatrix* not as an outsider, but in her position as mother. She knows that as such she can point out to her Son the needs of mankind, and in fact, she "has the right" to do so. Her mediation is thus in the nature of intercession: Mary "intercedes" for mankind. And that is not all. As a mother she also wishes the messianic power of her Son to be manifested, that salvific power of his which is meant to help man in his misfortunes, to free him from the evil which in various forms and degrees weighs heavily upon his life. Precisely as the Prophet Isaiah had foretold about the Messiah in the famous passage which Jesus quoted before his fellow townsfolk in Nazareth: "*To preach good news to the poor...to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind...*" (*Lk.* 4:18).

Another essential element of Mary's maternal task is found in her words to the servants: "*Do whatever he tells you.*" The Mother of Christ presents herself as the spokeswoman of her Son's will, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested. At Cana, thanks to the intercession of Mary and the obedience of the servants, Jesus begins "*his hour.*" At Cana Mary appears as

believing in Jesus. Her faith evokes his first “sign” and helps to kindle the faith of the disciples ...

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

§ 22. We can therefore say that *in this passage of John's Gospel we find as it were a first manifestation of the truth concerning Mary's maternal care.* This truth has also found expression in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. It is important to note how the Council illustrates Mary's maternal role as it relates to the mediation of Christ. Thus we read: “*Mary's maternal function towards mankind in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its efficacy,*” because “*there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5). This maternal role of Mary flows, according to God's good pleasure, “*from the superabundance of the merits of Christ; it is founded on his mediation, absolutely depends on it, and draws all its efficacy from it.*” It is precisely in this sense that the episode at Cana in Galilee offers us a sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.

From the text of John it is evident that it is a mediation which is maternal. As the Council proclaims: Mary became “*a mother to us in the order of grace.*” This motherhood in the order of grace flows from her divine motherhood. Because she was, by the design of divine Providence, the mother who nourished the divine Redeemer, Mary became “*an associate of unique nobility, and the Lord's humble handmaid,*” who “*cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls.*” And “*this maternity of Mary in the order of grace ... will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.*”

§ 23. If John's description of the event at Cana presents Mary's caring motherhood at the beginning of Christ's messianic activity, another passage from the same Gospel confirms this motherhood in the salvific economy of grace at its crowning moment, namely when Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, his Paschal Mystery, is accomplished. John's description is concise: “*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother: 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home*” (Jn. 19:25-27).

Undoubtedly, we find here an expression of the Son's particular solicitude for his Mother, whom he is leaving in such great sorrow. And yet the “testament of Christ's Cross” says more. Jesus highlights a new relationship between Mother and Son, the whole truth and reality of which he solemnly confirms. One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it 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 as mother to every single individual and all mankind. The man at the foot of the Cross is John, “*the disciple whom he loved.*” But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Council does not hesitate to call Mary “the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind”: since she “belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings ... Indeed she is ‘clearly the mother of the members of Christ...since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful.’” And so this “new motherhood of Mary,” generated by faith, is the fruit of the “new” love which

came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son.

3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom (*Matt. 6:25-27 / Mark 1:14 / Luke 15:11-24*)

MARK 1:14 ¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.*”

MATT. 4:12-17 ¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; ¹³ and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

LUKE 8:1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him.

CCC 541 “*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel.’ ‘To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth.’* Now the Father’s will is “*to raise up men to share in his own divine life.*” He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, “*on earth the seed and beginning of that kingdom.*”

CCC 542 Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the “*family of God.*” By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery—his death on the cross and his Resurrection—he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. “*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.*” Into this union with Christ all men are called.

CCC 543 *Everyone is called to enter the kingdom.* First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations. To enter it, one must first accept Jesus’ word: The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest (*LG 5; cf. Mk 4:14, 26–29; Lk 12:32*)

CCC 545 Jesus invites *sinner*s to the table of the kingdom: “*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*” He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father’s boundless mercy for them and the vast “*joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.*” The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life “*for the forgiveness of sins.*”

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 546 Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching. *Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough; deeds are required.* The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? What use has he made of the talents he has received? Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to “*know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.*” For those who stay “*outside,*” everything remains enigmatic (*Mk* 4:11; cf. *Mt* 13:10–15).

CCC 547 Jesus accompanies his words with many “*mighty works and wonders and signs,*” which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah (*Mk* 2:17).

CCC 548 The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. But his miracles can also be occasions for “*offense*” (*Mt.* 11:6); they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons (Cf. *Jn* 11:47–48; *Mk* 3:22).

CCC 549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness, and death, Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage (Cf. *Jn* 8:34–36).

CCC 550 The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: “*If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*” Jesus' *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over “the ruler of this world.” The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: “*God reigned from the wood.*”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III. Q. XLII.a.4

(*Christ's manner of teaching, i.e. Whether Christ should have committed His doctrine to writing?*)

I answer that, It was fitting that Christ should not commit His doctrine to writing.

First, on account of His dignity: for the more excellent the teacher, the more excellent should be his manner of teaching. Consequently it was fitting that Christ, as the most excellent of teachers, should adopt that manner of teaching whereby His doctrine is imprinted on the hearts of His hearers; wherefore it is written (*Matt.* 7:29) that *He was teaching them as one having power.* And so it was that among the Gentiles, Pythagoras and Socrates, who were teachers of great excellence, were unwilling to write anything. For writings are ordained, as to an end, unto the imprinting of doctrine in the hearts of the hearers.

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[Continued] Secondly, on account of the excellence of Christ's doctrine, which cannot be expressed in writing; according to *John 21:25*: *There are also many other things which Jesus did: which, if they were written, everyone, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.* Which Augustine explains by saying: *We are not to believe that in respect of space the world could not contain them: ... but that by the capacity of the readers they could not be comprehended.* And if Christ had committed His doctrine to writing, men would have had no deeper thought of His doctrine than that which appears on the surface of the writing.

Thirdly, that His doctrine might reach all in an orderly manner: Himself teaching His disciples immediately, and they subsequently teaching others, by preaching and writing: whereas if He Himself had written, His doctrine would have reached all immediately. Hence it is said of Wisdom (*Prov. 9:3*) that *she hath sent her maids to invite to the tower.* It is to be observed, however, that, as Augustine says (*De Consensu. Evang. i.*), some of the Gentiles thought that Christ wrote certain books treating of the magic art whereby He worked miracles: which art is condemned by the Christian learning. *And yet they who claim to have read those books of Christ do none of those things which they marvel at His doing according to those same books. Moreover, it is by a Divine judgment that they err so far as to assert that these books were, as it were, entitled as letters to Peter and Paul, for that they found them in several places depicted in company with Christ. No wonder that the inventors were deceived by the painters: for as long as Christ lived in the mortal flesh with His disciples, Paul was no disciple of His.*

St. Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount 2.6.20* (*May the Kingdom Be Fully Manifested*)

The expression "*thy kingdom come*" is not to be thought of as if God were not now reigning. But some might get the strange impression that "*come*" implies "*for the first time upon the earth*"—as if to imply that God were not even now really reigning upon earth! Or that God had not always reigned upon the earth from the foundation of the world! "*Come,*" therefore, is to be understood in the sense of "*manifested to humanity.*" Just as light that is present is absent to the blind or to those who shut their eyes, so the kingdom of God, though it never departs from the earth, yet is absent to those who know nothing about it. To none, however, will ignorance of God's kingdom be permitted when his Only Begotten comes from heaven. Then he will be recognizable not only by the intellect but visibly as the Man of the Lord to judge the living and the dead.

St. Basil the Great, *Concerning Baptism 1.1* (*Human Obligation Gives Way to Christian Discipleship*)

The man said, "*Allow me first to go and bury my father.*" The Lord replied, "*Let the dead bury their dead; but go and preach the kingdom of God.*" Another man said, "*Let me first arrange my affairs at home.*" He rebuked him with a stern threat, saying, "*No man, putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*" A person who wishes to become the Lord's disciple must repudiate a human obligation, however honorable it may appear, if it slows us ever so slightly in giving the wholehearted obedience we owe to God.

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[PRAYER]

Canticle of Mary (Magnificat)

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.*

4. The Transfiguration

(Matt. 17:1-8; cf. Luke 9:28-36)

MATT. 17:1-8 ¹ And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁵ He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

CCC 554 From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master “*began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ... and be killed, and on the third day be raised*” (Matt. 16:21). Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he. In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus’ Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James, and John. Jesus’ face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking

“of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.” A cloud covers him and a voice from heaven says: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 555 For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter’s confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to “enter into his glory.” (*Lk 24:26*) Moses and Elijah had seen God’s glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah’s sufferings. (*Lk 24:27*) Christ’s Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God’s servant; the cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. *“The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud.”*

You were transfigured on the mountain, and your disciples, as much as they were capable of it, beheld your glory, O Christ our God, so that when they should see you crucified they would understand that your Passion was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that you truly are the splendor of the Father.

- Byzantine Liturgy, Feast of the Transfiguration, *Kontakion*

CCC 556 *On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration.* Jesus’ baptism proclaimed “the mystery of the first regeneration,” namely, our Baptism; *the Transfiguration “is the sacrament of the second regeneration”: our own Resurrection* (St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh III, 45, 4, ad 2*). From now on we share in the Lord’s Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ. **The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ’s glorious coming, when he “will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.”** (*Phil 3:21*) But it also recalls that “it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God” (*Acts 14:22*).

Peter did not yet understand this when he wanted to remain with Christ on the mountain. It has been reserved for you, Peter, but for after death. For now, Jesus says: “Go down to toil on earth, to serve on earth, to be scorned and crucified on earth. Life goes down to be killed; Bread goes down to suffer hunger; the Way goes down to be exhausted on his journey; the Spring goes down to suffer thirst; and you refuse to suffer?” St. Augustine, *Sermo 78, 6*)

CCC 568 Christ’s Transfiguration aims at strengthening the apostles’ faith in anticipation of his Passion: the ascent onto the “high mountain” prepares for the ascent to Calvary. Christ, Head of the Church, manifests what his Body contains and radiates in the sacraments: “the hope of glory.”

CCC 2585 Finally, taking the desert road that leads to the place where the living and true God reveals himself to his people, *Elijah, like Moses before him, hides “in a cleft of the rock” until the mysterious presence of God has passed by.* (*1 Kings 19:1–14; compare with Exod. 33:19–23.*) **But only on the mountain of the Transfiguration will Moses and Elijah behold the unveiled face of him whom they sought; “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [shines] in the face of Christ,”** crucified and risen.

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 1161 All the signs in the liturgical celebrations are related to Christ: as are sacred images of the holy Mother of God and of the saints as well. *They truly signify Christ, who is glorified in them.* They make manifest the “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1) *who continue to participate in the salvation of the world and to whom we are united, above all in sacramental celebrations.* Through their icons, it is man “in the image of God,” finally transfigured “into his likeness,” (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2) who is revealed to our faith. So too are the angels, who also are recapitulated in Christ:

Following the divinely inspired teaching of our holy Fathers and the tradition of the Catholic Church ... we rightly define with full certainty and correctness that, like the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy images of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, our inviolate Lady, the holy Mother of God, and the venerated angels, all the saints and the just, whether painted or made of mosaic or another suitable material, are to be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, walls and panels, in houses and on streets. (Council of Nicaea II)

St. Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 3.17.4 (*I Will Make Three Booths*)

You go astray, Peter, just as the other Evangelist attests: you do not know what you are saying. Do not seek three tabernacles. *Seek only the tabernacle of the gospel in which the law and the prophets are to be recapitulated.* By seeking three tabernacles you appear to be comparing incommensurably the two servants with the one Lord. Seek only the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for in these there is one God, who is to be worshiped in the tabernacle of your heart.

St. Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns on Paradise 9.27 (*He Adapted Himself to Our Eyes*)

*The Lord who is beyond measure
measures out nourishment to all,
adapting to our eyes the sight of himself,
to our hearing his voice,
His blessing to our appetite,
His wisdom to our tongue.*

St. Leo the Great, Sermon 38.5 (*It Is Well That We Are Here*)

Excited therefore by these revelations of secret realities, the apostle Peter, spurning the mundane and loathing earthly things, was seized by a certain excess of passion toward a yearning for eternal things. Filled up with the joy of the whole vision, he wished to dwell there with Jesus where he was delighting in Christ's manifested glory. Thus Peter said, “*Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.*” But the Lord did not reply to this suggestion, *for it was not wicked but inappropriate,* since the world could not be saved except by Christ's death. And in the Lord's warning the faith of those who believe is called to account. *Among the temptations of this life we should understand that we are to ask for endurance before glory. Good fortune in ruling cannot come before a time of enduring.*

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

Dale Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*.

A Chiasmic Structure?¹²

One wonders whether the text does not reflect a chiasmic arrangement. One can correlate the narrative introduction with the narrative conclusion, the transfiguration of Jesus with the words of Jesus, the response of Peter with the response of the disciples.

Pictorially:

- a. Narrative introduction (1)
- b. Jesus is transfigured (2–3)
- c. Peter's response (4)
- d. The divine voice (5)
- c¹. The disciples' response (6)
- b¹. Jesus speaks (7)
- a¹. Narrative conclusion (8)

If this chiasmic analysis is correct, it means that the voice from heaven is the structural centre of the pericope.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Whether it was fitting that Christ should be transfigured?*¹³

Objection 1. It seems that it was not fitting that Christ should be *transfigured*. For it is not fitting for a true body to be changed into various shapes (*figuras*), but only for an imaginary body. Now Christ's body was not imaginary, but real, as stated above (Q. V., A. 1). Therefore it seems that it should not have been transfigured.

Obj. 2. Further, figure is in the fourth species of quality, whereas clarity is in the third, since it is a sensible quality. Therefore Christ's assuming clarity should not be called a transfiguration.

Obj. 3. Further, a glorified body has four gifts, as we shall state farther on (Suppl. Q. LXXXII.)—viz., impassibility, agility, subtlety, and clarity. Therefore His transfiguration should not have consisted in an assumption of clarity rather than of the other gifts.

On the contrary, It is written (*Matt. 17:2*) that Jesus *was transfigured* in the presence of three of His disciples.

I answer that, Our Lord, after foretelling His Passion to His disciples, had exhorted them to follow the path of His sufferings (*Matt. 16:21, 24*). Now in order that anyone go straight along a road, he must have some knowledge of the end: thus an archer will not shoot the arrow straight unless he first see the target. Hence Thomas said (*John 14:5*): *Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?* Above all is this necessary when hard and rough is the road, heavy the going, but delightful the end. Now by His Passion Christ achieved glory, not only of His soul, which He had from the first moment of His conception, but also of His body; according to Luke (*24:26*): *Christ ought (Vulg., ought not Christ) to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory (?)* To which glory He brings those who follow the footsteps of His Passion, according to *Acts 14:21*:

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

¹² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 684.

¹³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III. Q XLV. 1.ad 4.

[Continued] *Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.* Therefore it was fitting that He should show His disciples the glory of His clarity (which is to be transfigured), to which He will configure those who are His; according to *Phil. 3:21: (Who) will reform the body of our lowliness configured (made like) to the body of His glory.* Hence Bede says on *Mark 8:39: By His loving foresight He allowed them to taste for a short time the contemplation of eternal joy, so that they might bear persecution bravely.*

[PRAYER]

Stella Maris¹⁴

*Hail, you Star of Ocean!
Portal of the sky,
Ever Virgin Mother,
Of the Lord most high.*

*O! by Gabriel's Ave,
Uttered long ago,
Eva's name reversing,
Establish peace below.
Break the captive's fetters;
Light on blindness pour;
All our ills expelling,
Ev'ry bliss implore.*

*Show yourself a mother;
Offer him our sighs,
Who for us Incarnate
Did not you despise.*

*Virgin of all virgins!
To your shelter take us;
Gentlest of the gentle!
Chaste and gentle make us.*

*Still as on we journey,
Help our weak endeavor,
Till with you and Jesus
We rejoice forever.*

*Through the highest heaven,
To the Almighty Three,
Father, Son, and Spirit,
One same glory be.*

5. The Institution of the Eucharist

¹⁴ The Latin version of this prayer, *Ave, Maris stella*, can be traced to the late eighth/early ninth century. The title, Star of the Sea (or Ocean), is one of the oldest and most widely spread titles for Mary. The prayer is often used to pray for travelers. Mary herself is a sign of hope for a safe arrival to one's destination.

(Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-16; cf. John 6:35-71)

(MATT. 26:26-29)

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

(MARK 14:22-25)

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

(LUKE 22:14-20)

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he sat at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰ And likewise the cup after supper, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

The institution of the Eucharist

CCC 1337 The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love. (*John* 13:34-35) In order to leave them a pledge of this love, in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover, he instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his death and Resurrection, and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return; “thereby he constituted them priests of the New Testament.”

CCC 1338 The three synoptic Gospels and St. Paul have handed on to us the account of the institution of the Eucharist; St. John, for his part, reports the words of Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum that prepare for the institution of the Eucharist: Christ calls himself the bread of life, come down from heaven (cf. *John* 6)

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

CCC 1340 By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, *Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning*. Jesus' passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom.

“Do this in memory of me”

CCC 1341 The command of Jesus to repeat his actions and words “until he comes” does not only ask us to remember Jesus and what he did. It is directed at the liturgical celebration, by the apostles and their successors, of the *memorial* of Christ, of his life, of his death, of his Resurrection, and of his intercession in the presence of the Father. (Cf. *1 Cor* 11:26)

CCC 1342 From the beginning the Church has been faithful to the Lord's command. Of the Church of Jerusalem it is written: *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.... Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts.* (*Acts* 2:42, 46)

CCC 1343 It was above all on “the first day of the week,” Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection, that the Christians met “to break bread. From that time on down to our own day the celebration of the Eucharist has been continued so that today we encounter it everywhere in the Church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life. (*1166, 2177*)

Origen, Commentary on Matthew 85 (*Bread from Heavenly Bread*)

The bread which God the Word revealed to be his own body, the Word of the sustainer of souls. What was set upon the table was the Word proceeding from God the Word, bread from heavenly bread, as it is written: “You have prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies” (Psa. 23:5). And the wine which God the Word revealed to be his blood is the Word filling and wondrously inebriating the hearts of all who drink it. It is the Word contained in that chalice about which it is written: “My cup overflows.”³ This wine is the fruit of the true vine who said, “*I am the true vine*” (*John* 15:1). It is blood of grapes processed in the winepress of his Passion. Likewise the bread is the Word of Christ ground from that grain of wheat which “falls into the earth” and “bears much fruit.” It was not the visible bread that he held in his hands which God the Word called his body, but it was the Word in whose sacrament the bread was to be broken. Nor was it the visible drink that he identified as his blood, but it was the Word in whose sacrament the libation was to be poured out.

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

St. Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 4.26.27 (*The Sacrament of the Passover*)

After the typical Passover meal was over and he had eaten the flesh of the lamb with his apostles, he took the bread that strengthens human hearts (*Psa 104:15*) and moved on to the true sacrament of the Passover. *Thus even as Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God, had prefigured Christ by offering bread and wine (Gen. 14:8), so Jesus would exemplify this with his real body and blood.*

Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 11

§ 11. Jesus thus brings his own radical *novum* to the ancient Hebrew sacrificial meal. For us Christians, that meal no longer need be repeated. As the Church Fathers rightly say, *figura transit in veritatem*: the foreshadowing has given way to the truth itself. The ancient rite has been brought to fulfillment and definitively surpassed by the loving gift of the incarnate Son of God. The food of truth, Christ sacrificed for our sake, *dat figuris terminum*.

By his command to "do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25*), he asks us to respond to his gift and to make it sacramentally present. In these words the Lord expresses, as it were, his expectation that the Church, born of his sacrifice, will receive this gift, developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the liturgical form of the sacrament. *The remembrance of his perfect gift consists not in the mere repetition of the Last Supper, but in the Eucharist itself, that is, in the radical newness of Christian worship. In this way, Jesus left us the task of entering into his "hour." "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving." Jesus "draws us into himself."*

The substantial conversion of bread and wine into his body and blood introduces within creation the principle of a radical change, *a sort of "nuclear fission,"* to use an image familiar to us today, *which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all* (cf. *1 Cor 15:28*).

Blessed John Paul II, *Letter to Priests, Holy Thursday 1988*

(The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Priest)

§ 7. The priesthood, which has its beginning in the Last Supper, enables us to share in this essential transformation of man's spiritual history. For in the Eucharist we present the sacrifice of redemption, the same sacrifice which Christ offered on the cross "with his own blood." Through this sacrifice we too, as its sacramental dispensers, together with all those whom we serve through its celebration, continually touch the decisive moment of that spiritual combat which, according to the Books of Genesis and Revelation, is linked with the "woman."

In this battle she is entirely united with the Redeemer. And therefore our priestly ministry too unites us with her: with her who is the Mother of the Redeemer and the "model" of the Church. In this way all remain united with her in this spiritual battle which takes place throughout the course of human history. *In this battle we have special part by virtue of our sacramental priesthood. We fulfill a special service in the work of the world's redemption ...*

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[Continued] The Second Vatican Council teaches that Mary advanced in her pilgrimage of faith through her perfect union with her Son unto the cross and goes before, presenting herself in an eminent and singular way to the whole People of God, which follows the same path, in the footsteps of Christ in the Holy Spirit. *Should not we priests unite ourselves with her in a special way, we who as pastors of the Church must also lead the communities entrusted to us along the path which from the Upper Room of Pentecost follows Christ throughout human history?*

Let us unceasingly give thanks for this. Let us give thanks with the whole of our lives. Let us give thanks with all our strength. Let us give thanks together with Mary, the Mother of priests. "How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me? The cup of salvation I will raise; I will call on the Lord's name" (*Psa 116:12-13*).

Pope Benedict XVI, Solemnity of Corpus Christi

(*Basilica of Saint John Lateran, June 3, 2010*)

In [the Eucharist], Jesus anticipated his Sacrifice, a non-ritual but a personal sacrifice. At the Last Supper his actions were prompted by that "eternal spirit" with which he was later to offer himself on the Cross (*Heb 9: 14*). Giving thanks and blessing, Jesus transforms the bread and the wine. It is divine love that transforms them: the love with which Jesus accepts, in anticipation, to give the whole of himself for us. *This love is nothing other than the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, who consecrates the bread and the wine and changes their substance into the Body and Blood of the Lord, making present in the Sacrament the same sacrifice that is fulfilled in a bloody way on the Cross.* We may therefore conclude that Christ is a true and effective priest because he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he was filled with the whole fullness of God's love and precisely "in the night on which he was betrayed", precisely, "in the hour... of darkness" (*Lk 22: 53*).

It is this divine power, the same power that brought about the Incarnation of the Word, that transformed the extreme violence and extreme injustice into a supreme act of love and justice. This is the work of the priesthood of Christ which the Church inherited and extended in history, in the dual form of the common priesthood of the baptized and the ordained priesthood of ministers, in order to transform the world with God's love. Let us all, priests and faithful, nourish ourselves with the same Eucharist, let us all prostrate ourselves to adore it, because in it our Master and Lord is present, the true Body of the Jesus is present in it, the Victim and the Priest, the salvation of the world. Come let us exult with joyful songs! Come, let us adore him! Amen.

Scott Hahn, Kinship By Covenant

We have seen the relationship between the juxtaposed promises of "eating and drinking in my kingdom" and "sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (v. 30a, b). Searching for the scriptural background of this concept of "thrones over the twelve tribes," we find an allusion to the Davidic imagery of *Psalms 122:3-5*:

Topic #6 – The Luminous Mysteries (Continued)

[Continued]

*“Jerusalem, built as a city which is bound firmly together /
To which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord ... /
There thrones for judgment were set /
The thrones of the House of David.”*

The connection between the two texts is firm, in light of the collocation in each of the three elements: “tribes,” “thrones,” and “judgment.” *Psalm 122:5b* makes explicit the Davidic context of the promise of *Luke 22:30b*. The disciples, then, are promised a share in the exercise of authority of the Davidic monarchy over all twelve tribes.

The disciples’ *“appointment is an anticipation of the restoration of Israel ... and [they] are commissioned to govern the renewed people of God.”* L. T. Johnson comments on the significance of Luke’s version of this dominical saying vis-à-vis Matthew’s version:

“Luke decisively alters the reference point for this prediction ... In Luke the saying points forward to the role that the apostles will have within the *restored Israel in the narrative of Acts*.... These followers [will] exercise effective rule within the people gathered by the power of the resurrected prophet (see e.g., *Acts 5:1–11*).”

It is now possible to grasp the logical relationship between *Luke 22:19–20* and *22:28–30*. Jesus is the heir of the covenant with David, by virtue of which he is eternal king over Israel and the nations (*Luke 1:32–33*). In *Luke 22:19–20* he enacts a *new* covenant between himself and the disciples, who share in the covenant meal.

This new covenant is a renewal and extension of the covenant with David: in essence, the privileges of the Davidic covenant are being extended to the Apostles, as in *Isaiah 55:3*, *“I will make with you an everlasting covenant; my steadfast, sure love for David.”* By virtue of their sharing in the covenant established in vv. 19–20, the Apostles, like Christ, are now heirs of the kingdom of David (v. 29a).

Because they are heirs, they have *filial privileges: they may eat at the royal table* (v. 30a) and sit *on the thrones of the royal house, judging the twelve tribes* (v. 30b). The Davidic traditions form the context for the logic of the entire transaction, and it is clear that the Apostles have become heirs of the kingdom and covenant of David.

The ecclesiological ramifications are profound, since the twelve Apostles *“are transitional figures who link the church with the ministry of Jesus (cf. [Acts] 1:1) ... [and] provide an essential foundation for the church’s continuing faith and life.”* If the foundation is Davidic, the edifice will be Davidic as well.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES

OPENING REFLECTION: POPE PAUL VI

Devotion to the Mother of the Lord becomes for the faithful an opportunity for growing in divine grace, and this is the ultimate aim of all pastoral activity. For it is impossible to honor her who is “full of grace” (Luke 1:28) without thereby honoring in oneself the state of grace, which is friendship with God, communion with Him and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is this divine grace which takes possession of the whole man and conforms him to the image of the Son of God.

The Catholic Church, endowed with centuries of experience, recognizes in devotion to the Blessed Virgin a powerful aid for man as he strives for fulfillment. Mary, the New Woman, stands at the side of Christ, the New Man, within whose mystery the mystery of man alone finds true light; she is given to us as a pledge and guarantee that God's plan in Christ for the salvation of the whole man has already achieved realization in a creature: in her.

Contemplated in the episodes of the Gospels and in the reality which she already possesses in the City of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary offers a calm vision and a reassuring word to modern man, torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust. She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death.

- Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus* (“Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary”, 1974)

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden (*Matt. 26:36-46 / Luke 22:39-46*)
2. The Scourging at the Pillar (*Matt. 27:15-26*)
3. The Crowning with Thorns (*Matt. 27:27-31*)
4. The Carrying of the Cross (*Luke 23:23-31*)
5. The Crucifixion (*Matt. 27:35-66 / Mark 15:25-47 / Luke 23:33-56 / John 19:18-42*)

1. The Agony in the Garden (*Matt. 26:36-46 / Luke 22:39-46*)

(MATT. 26:36-46; CF. LUKE 22:39-46)

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." ³⁷ And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." ³⁹ And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ⁴² Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done." ⁴³ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

The agony at Gethsemani

CCC 612 The cup of the New Covenant, which Jesus anticipated when he offered himself at the Last Supper, is afterwards accepted by him from his Father's hands in his agony in the garden at Gethsemani, making himself "*obedient unto death*." Jesus prays: "*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...*" Thus he expresses the horror that death represented for his human nature. *Like ours, his human nature is destined for eternal life; but unlike ours, it is perfectly exempt from sin, the cause of death.* Above all, his human nature has been assumed by the divine person of the "Author of life," the "Living One." By accepting in his human will that the Father's will be done, he accepts his death as redemptive, for "he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree."

CCC 532 Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. *The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "Not my will..." The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.*

CCC 478 Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: "The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me." He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, "is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine

Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings” without exception.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke, Homily 146*

(The Mystery of Christ’s Grief)

The Savior stayed in Jerusalem during the day, evidently teaching the Israelites and revealing to them the way of the kingdom of heaven. When the evening came, he continued with the holy disciples on the Mount of Olives at a spot called Gethsemane. The wise evangelist Matthew tells us this...

“Taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.’” Going forward a little, Christ knelt and prayed, saying, *“Father, if you will, put this cup away from me, but not my will but yours be done.”*

Please see here the depths of the appointed time in the flesh and the height of that unspeakable wisdom. *Focus the penetrating eye of the mind on it.* If you can see the beautiful art of the mystery, you also will say, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33).*

St. Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 10.56*

(Taking Our Sadness to Bestow Joy)

Very many people have difficulty with this passage. They attribute the Savior’s sorrow to a weakness implanted from the beginning, rather than received for a time ... Nowhere else than here do I marvel more at his piety and majesty. It would have profited me less if he had not received my grief. He who had no reason to grieve for himself therefore grieved for me. *Having set aside the delight in eternal Divinity, he is afflicted by the weariness of my weakness. He took my sadness in order to bestow on me his joy. He came down to our footprints, even to the hardship of death, in order to call us back to life in his own footprints.*

St. Ephrem the Syrian, *On Tatian’s Diatessaron 20.2, 11*

(Jesus Sweat Heals Adam)

“If it is possible, let this chalice pass from me.” He knew that he was going to rise on the third day, but he also knew in advance the scandal of his disciples, the denial of Simon, the suicide of Judas, the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of Israel. *“If it is possible, let the chalice pass from me,”* he said. He knew what he was saying to his Father and was well aware that this chalice could pass from him. He had come to drink it for everyone, in order to cancel, through this chalice, the debt of all, a debt that the prophets and martyrs could not pay with their death ... *“His sweat became like drops of blood,”* the Evangelist said. *He sweated to heal Adam who was sick. “It is by the sweat of your brow,”* said God, *“that you will eat your bread.” He remained in prayer in this garden to bring Adam back into his own garden again.*

St. Leo the Great *Sermon 43.2. (Let This Cup Pass)*

The disciples were admonished, and the Lord beseeches the Father that they might confront the force of the present temptation with watchful prayer: *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as you will.”*

The first petition arises from weakness, the second from strength: He desired the former based on our nature and chose the latter based on his own ...

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued] *The lower will yielded to the higher will, and this demonstrated what the fearful person may pray for and what the divine healer should not grant. “For we do not know how to pray as we ought,” (Rom. 8:26) and it is good for us that what we want, for the most part, is not granted. God, who is good and just, shows mercy toward us by denying us those things we ask for which are harmful.*

SPECIAL EXCURSUS: REFLECTIONS ON GETHSEMANE WITH POPE BENEDICT XVI

PART I: RECAPITULATION OF THE OLD INTO THE NEW THROUGH JESUS

- ❖ Old Passover into the New Passover
- ❖ King David – and the New David
- ❖ The Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane

1. **Old Passover into the New Passover** - liberation from slavery into true liberation from slavery to sin (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, p. 147*)
 - a. When Jesus prays, he is completely in union with Israel, and yet he is Israel in a new way: the old Passover now appears as a great foreshadowing. The new Passover, though, is Jesus himself, and the true "liberation" is taking place now, through his love that embraces all mankind.
 - b. *Jesus takes on himself the identity – and destiny of the Lamb* - Jesus goes out into the night with his disciples, reminding us of the night when the first-born of Egypt were struck down and Israel was saved through the blood of the Lamb. (*Exod 12*). (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, p. 145*)
2. **King David - and the New David** (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, pp. 145-52*)
 - a. *Hallel* Psalms (*Psa 113-118, 136*) The Jewish pilgrims sang hymns of thanksgiving to God for liberating Israel from Egypt– Jesus prays the Passover psalms of Israel with his disciples.
 - b. King David and the Real David (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, pp. 145-147*)
 - i. *The Old David* – He leads and inspires the prayer of Israel, who sums up all Israel’s sufferings and hopes, carries them with himself and expressed them in prayer.
 - ii. *The Real David* - Jesus is the real David, as the early Church hailed him. The Psalms are a continuation of Israel’s prayer - and are recited in a new way as a prayer in communion with Jesus in a new hope.
 1. *Psalms acquire a new subject* - beyond Israel into universality.
 2. *The Psalms become fully personal* - they have become the intimate words of Jesus himself in the agony. It is He who truly prays these Psalms; He is their true Subject.
3. **The Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane** (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, p. 149*)
 - a. What did experience?
 1. The whole anguish of the human condition
 2. The abyss of sin and evil penetrated deep within his soul.

3. He was to quake with foreboding of his imminent death.
4. He was kissed by his betrayer – and abandoned by all his disciples.
5. He wrestled with His destiny for my sake.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

- b. Why did Jesus experience these things?
 1. Recapitulation of the Garden of Eden (Unmistakable reference to the story of Paradise & the Fall: "*Across the Kidron valley, where there was a garden ...*" (*John* 18:1) Here, in the garden that Jesus fully accepted the Father's will, made it his own, and thus changed the course of history.
 2. It is in a garden that Jesus is betrayed, but also in a garden that he is Resurrected: "In the place where he was crucified, there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid." (*John* 19:41)

PART II: PROPHECY & DENIAL (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, pp. 150-152*)

1. The Prophet Zechariah - the shepherd would be stuck down and then the sheep would be scattered (*Zech*13:7 // *Mt*26:31-35)
 - ❖ *Struck Down* - Jesus allows himself to be struck down, taking up the cause of all who are stuck down.
 - ❖ *Scattered* - The community of disciples is scattered, the newly formed family of God falls apart before it has been properly established.
 - ❖ The *Good Shepherd* lays down his life for the sheep (*John* 10:11)
 - ❖ Its hour has come - the hour which the *Good Shepherd* is *struck down* and the disciples are *scattered*.
2. A Prophecy of Salvation: "After I am raised up, I will *go before* you to Galilee." (*Mark* 14:28)
 - ❖ "Go before" - Expression tied to a shepherd, who went before the sheep to lead the way
 - ❖ Good Shepherd - Offers his life, which is the going before, and leads the way. As the risen Lord, he now in the fullest sense the shepherd who leads, through death, to the path of life.
3. Peter's threefold denial - Peter wants Jesus to bypass the Cross.
 - ❖ Peter is relying on his own resources - Victory without the Cross and without suffering. This is the constant temptation for Christians, for the Church: to seek victory without the Cross!
 - ❖ Peter's denial is held up to him because no one is strong enough to do it on their own, though many try.
 - ❖ All have sinned, all need the Lord's mercy, the love of the Crucified One. (*Rom* 3:23-24)

PART III: THE PRAYER OF JESUS IN GETHSEMANE (*Jesus of Nazareth, Vol. 2, pp. 152-162*)

- a. *Drowsiness of the Disciples* – Points immediately to Gethsemane, but also to Christianity and the Church.
 - i. Deadens the soul - Drowsiness of disciples throughout the centuries that opens up possibilities for the power of the Evil One.
 - ii. The soul prefers not to see, so as to continue in the self-satisfaction of its own comfortable existence.
- b. *Jesus' own Prayer* - Jesus goes a short distance away ...

- i. Prostrate - Mt and Mk - Jesus falls on his face. Extreme submission to the will of God and radical self-offering to him.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

- ii. Kneeling - Luke - He draws Jesus' night of anguish into the context of the history of Christian prayer. Luke express this in drops of blood, while John, Matthew, and Mark express the fear with same level of inner turmoil as at the tomb of Lazarus and the prophecy of the betrayal of Judas in the Upper Room.
- iii. *The two wills* - "Father save me from this hour... Father glorify your name" (John 12:27-28)
 1. Natural Will - The is the will that sees the appalling destructiveness of what is happening and wants to plead that the chalice pass from him.
 2. Filial Will - Abandons itself totally to the Father's Divine Will
- iv. *Abba* (Father) - a filial term for father. OT: God is never addressed as 'Abba.' Reveals the heart of his relationship with the Father.

POPE BENEDICT XVI'S CHALLENGE TO US

- ❖ *Pray the Psalms, with Jesus, the Real David, the True David.*
- ❖ *No victory without the Cross* - Peter denied Jesus three times. Realizing this drives us too to loving dependence upon Jesus; none of us are strong enough to do it all on our own.
- ❖ *Grasp our own personal sin upon the Cross* – It is not only the sin of “all” – but also of me; my own sin was present in that terrifying chalice of the Cross.
- ❖ *Redemptive Value of Suffering.* It is in suffering of obedience to the divine will that Jesus was made perfect, consecrated a high priest. Jesus perfected suffering, and even in our own, it is never in vain, when we endure trails with and through Christ.
- ❖ *Christ's Sonship and ours* - As we share in Christ's sufferings, we also share in the sonship that Jesus has with the Father. But we must *suffer* obedience to *share* in that sonship.

[PRAYER]

The Memorare¹⁵

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. *Amen.*

¹⁵ The *Memorare* is a sixteenth-century version of a fifteenth-century prayer that began, “*Ad sanctitatis tuae pedes, dulcissima Virgo Maria.*” (Claude Bernard [1588-1641] popularized the idea that it was written by St. Bernard.)

2. The Scouring at the Pillar (*Matt. 27:15-26*)

SCRIPTURE (*Matt. 27:15-26*)

¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?” ¹⁸ For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. ¹⁹ Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream.” ²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. ²¹ The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” ²² Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified.” ²³ And he said, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified.” ²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this righteous man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” ²⁵ And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” ²⁶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

CCC 426 “At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father ... *who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.*” To catechize is “*to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him.*” Catechesis aims at putting “people ... in communion ... with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.

3. The Crowning with Thorns (*Matt. 27:27-31*)

SCRIPTURE (*Matt. 27:27-31*)

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, ²⁹ and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ³⁰ And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

CCC 598 In her Magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of her saints, the Church has never forgotten that “sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured” (*Roman Catechism* I, 5, 11; cf. *Heb*

12:3). Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself, the Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the ...

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued] torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone:

We must regard as guilty all those who continue to relapse into their sins. Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts (for he is in them) and hold him up to contempt. And it can be seen that our crime in this *case is greater in us than in the Jews. As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." We, however, profess to know him. And when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him.*

"Nor did demons crucify him; it is you who have crucified him and crucify him still, when you delight in your vices and sins." (St. Francis of Assisi, *Admonitio* 5, 3)

CCC 1742 *Freedom and grace.* The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart. On the contrary, as Christian experience attests especially in prayer, the more docile we are to the promptings of grace, the more we grow in inner freedom and confidence during trials, such as those we face in the pressures and constraints of the outer world. By the working of grace the Holy Spirit educates us in spiritual freedom in order to make us free collaborators in his work in the Church and in the world:

*Almighty and merciful God,
in your goodness take away from us all that is harmful,
so that, made ready both in mind and body,
we may freely accomplish your will.*

(Roman Missal, 32nd Sunday, Opening Prayer: *Omnipotens et misericors Deus, universa nobis adversantia propitiatus exclude, ut, mente et corpore pariter expediti, quæ tua sunt liberis mentibus exsequamur.*)

CCC 1820 Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. *The beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus.* But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint" (*Rom. 5:5*). Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul ... that enters ... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (*Heb.6:19-20*). *Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation:* "Let us ... put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (*1 Thess. 5:8*). It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation" (*Rom. 12:12*). Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, *especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.*

Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John 1.72–73 (*We are His thorns*)

There are those who still have thorns with which they crown and dishonor Jesus, those, namely, who are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life and, though they have received the word of God, do not bring it to perfection *We*

must beware, therefore, lest we also, as crowning Jesus with thorns of our own, should be entered in the Gospel ... and read how he is dishonored and mocked and beaten [by us].

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

Origen, Commentary on Matthew 12 (*The Scarlet Robe*)

That scarlet robe was prefigured by the scarlet sign mentioned in Joshua the son of Nun, which Rahab used for her safety (*Josh. 2:18*) and mentioned in Genesis (*Gen. 38:28*), which was placed on the hand of one of Tamar's newborn sons in token of the future Passion of Christ. So now, in taking up the "scarlet robe," he took upon himself the blood of the world, and in that thorny "crown" plaited on his head he took upon himself the thorns of our sins. As to the robe, it is written that "they stripped him of the scarlet robe." But as to the crown of thorns, the Evangelists mention nothing further. Apparently they wanted us to determine what happened to that crown of thorns placed on his head and never removed. *My belief is that the crown of thorns disappeared from the head of Jesus, so that our former thorns no longer exist now that Jesus has removed them from us once and for all on his own distinguished head.*

St. Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator 2.8 (*The Church is the Crown*)

The Lord's crown of thorns prophetically pointed to us who once were barren but are placed around him through the church of which he is the head. But it is also a type of faith, of life in respect to the substance of the wood, of joy in respect to the appellation of crown, of danger in respect to the thorn. For there is no approaching the Word without blood.... They crowned Jesus raised up high, testifying to their own ignorance.... This crown is the flower of those who have believed on the glorified One, but it covers with blood and chastises those who have not believed. It is a symbol, too, of the Lord's successful work, he having borne on his head (the princely part of his body) all our iniquities by which we were pierced. For he by his own passion rescued us from offenses and sins and other thorns. And having destroyed the devil, deservedly said in triumph, "*O Death, where is your sting?*"

St. Augustine, Tractates on the Gospel of John 118.4 (*The Casting of Lots*)

Someone, perhaps, may inquire what is signified by the division that was made of his garments into so many parts and of the casting of lots for the coat. *The clothing of the Lord Jesus Christ divided into four symbolized his fourfold church.* This church is spread abroad over the whole world, consisting of four equal quarters, that is to say, harmoniously distributed over all these quarters. This is why he says elsewhere that he will send his angels to gather his elect from the four winds—and what is that, but from the four quarters of the world: east, west, north and south?

But the coat, for which lots were cast, signifies the unity of all the parts that is contained in the bond of charity.... If, then, charity is both a more excellent way and far surpasses knowledge and is enjoined above all things, it is with great propriety that the garment, by which it is signified, is represented as woven from above. And it was without seam so that it can never become unsewn.

And it is in one piece because he gathers all into one.... And by the casting of lots, what else is commended but the grace of God?... When the lot is cast, the award is decided not by the merits of each individual but by the secret judgment of God.

4. The Carrying of the Cross (*Luke 23:23-31*)

SCRIPTURE (*Luke 23:23-31*)

³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will. ²⁶ And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. ²⁸ But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!’ ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

B. CATECHESIS

CCC 2669 The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the *Heart of Jesus* just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins. *Christian prayer loves to follow the way of the cross in the Savior’s steps. The stations from the Praetorium to Golgotha and the tomb trace the way of Jesus, who by his holy Cross has redeemed the world.*

CCC 618 The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the “*one mediator between God and men.*” But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, “the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” is offered to all men. He calls his disciples to “*take up [their] cross and follow [him],*” (*Matt. 16:24*) for “*Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps.*” (*1 Pet. 2:21*) In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. *This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering (Luke 2:35)*

“Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.”

- St. Rose of Lima

CCC 2015 *The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross.* There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the *asceticism* and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:

He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.

- St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. in Cant. 8.*)

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

St. Ephrem the Syrian, Commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron* 20.20 (*Simon Carries Jesus' Cross*)

After he took up the wood of his cross and set out, they found and stopped a man of Cyrene, that is, from among the Gentiles, and placed the wood of the cross on him. It was only right that they should have given the wood of the cross voluntarily to the Gentiles, since in their rebellion, the Jews rejected the coming of him who was bringing all blessings. In rejecting it themselves, in their jealousy, they threw it away to the Gentiles. They rejected it in their jealousy, and the Gentiles received it, to their even greater jealousy. The Lord approved the welcoming Gentiles and thus provoked jealousy among their contemporaries through the Gentiles' acceptance. By carrying the wood of his cross himself, Christ revealed the sign of his victory. Christ said that another person would not pressure him into death. *"I have power over my life, to lay it down or to take it up again"* (John 10:18). Why should another person have carried the cross? This showed that he, in whom no sin could be found, went up on the cross for those who rejected him.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke, Homily 152. (*Isaac, A Type of Christ*)

When blessed Abraham went up the mountain that God showed him so that he might sacrifice Isaac according to God's command, he laid the wood on the boy. Isaac was a type of Christ carrying his own cross on his shoulders and going up to the glory of his passion. Christ taught us that his passion was his glory. He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once."

St. Leo the Great, Sermon 8.4.

When our Lord was handed over to the will of his cruel foes, they ordered him, in mockery of his royal dignity, to carry the instrument of his own torture. This was done to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: "A child is born for us, a son is given to us; sovereignty is laid on his shoulders." To the wicked, the sight of *the Lord carrying his own cross was indeed an object of derision. But to the faithful a great mystery was revealed, for the cross was destined to become the scepter of his power. Here was the majestic spectacle of a glorious conqueror mightily overthrowing the hostile forces of the devil and nobly bearing the trophy of his victory.* On the shoulders of his invincible patience he carried the sign of salvation for all the kingdoms of the earth to worship, as if on that day he would strengthen all his future disciples by the symbol of his work and say to them, *"Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."*

Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day

(*25th World Youth Day - Sunday, 28 March 2010*)

Lastly, we must say again: the Cross is also part of the ascent towards the heights of Jesus Christ, of the ascent to the heights of God. Just as in the affairs of this world it is impossible to achieve great results without self-sacrifice and hard work; just as joy in a great discovery of knowledge or in a true operational skill is linked to discipline, indeed, to the effort of learning, so the way toward life itself, to the realization of one's own humanity, is linked to communion with the One who ascended to God's heights through the Cross. *In the final analysis, the Cross is an expression of what love means: only those who lose themselves find themselves.*

5. The Crucifixion

(Matt. 27:35-66 / Mark 15:25-47 / Luke 23:33-56 / John 19:18-42)

(JOHN 19:18-42; CF. MATT. 27:35-66 / MARK 15:25-47 / LUKE 23:33-56)

¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; ²⁴ so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the scripture, “*They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*”

²⁵ So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

²⁸ After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), “I thirst.” ²⁹ A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; ³³ but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe.

³⁶ For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, “Not a bone of him shall be broken.” ³⁷ And again another scripture says, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced.”

³⁸ After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds’ weight. ⁴⁰ They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

Jesus handed over according to the definite plan of God

CCC 599 Jesus' violent death was not the result of chance in an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, but is part of the mystery of God's plan, as St. Peter explains to the Jews of Jerusalem in his first sermon on Pentecost: "*This Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23)*". This Biblical language does not mean that those who handed him over were merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God.

God takes the initiative of universal redeeming love

CCC 604 By giving up his own Son for our sins, God manifests that his plan for us is one of benevolent love, prior to any merit on our part: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (*1 John 4:10*). God "shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (*Rom. 5:8*).

The Lamb who takes away the sin of the world

CCC 608 After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (*John 1:29*). By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover (*Isa 53:7, 12*; cf. *Jer 11:19*; *Ex 12:3–14*; *Jn 19:36*; *1 Cor 5:7*). Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "*to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (*Mark 10:45*).

Christ's death is the unique and definitive sacrifice

CCC 613 Christ's death is both the *Paschal sacrifice* that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," and the *sacrifice of the New Covenant*, which restores man to communion with God by reconciling him to God through the "blood of the covenant, which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (*Mt 26:28*; cf. *Ex 24:8*; *Lev 16:15–16*; *1 Cor 11:25*).

CCC 614 This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices (*Heb. 10:10*). First, *it is a gift from God the Father himself*, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time *it is the offering of the Son of God made man*, who in freedom and love offered his life to his Father through the Holy Spirit in reparation for our disobedience (Cf. *Jn 10:17–18*; *15:13*; *Heb 9:14*; *1 Jn 4:10*).

Jesus consummates his sacrifice on the Cross

CCC 616 It is love "to the end" (*John 13:1*) that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died" (*2 Cor. 5:14*). *No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all*. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, *makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all*.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

CCC 617 The Council of Trent emphasizes the unique character of Christ's sacrifice as "*the source of eternal salvation*" and teaches that "*his most holy Passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us.*" And the Church venerates his cross as it sings: "*Hail, O Cross, our only hope*" (*Liturgy of the Hours, Lent, Holy Week, Evening Prayer, Hymn Vexilla regis*)

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.Q. XLVI 46.a.3

(Whether there was any more suitable way of delivering the human race than by Christ's Passion?)

I answer that, Among means to an end that one is the more suitable whereby the various concurring means employed are themselves helpful to such end. But in this that man was delivered by Christ's Passion, many other things besides deliverance from sin concurred for man's salvation.

In the [first](#) place, man knows thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return, and herein lies the perfection of human salvation; hence the Apostle says (*Rom. 5:8*): *God commendeth His charity towards us; for when as yet we were sinners ... Christ died for us.*

[Secondly](#), because thereby He set us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the Passion, which are requisite for man's salvation. Hence it is written (*1 Pet. 2:21*): *Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps.*

[Thirdly](#), because Christ by His Passion not only delivered man from sin, but also merited justifying grace for him and the glory of bliss, as shall be shown later . Fourthly, because man is all the more bound to refrain from sin, when he bears in mind that he has been redeemed by Christ's blood, according to *1 Cor. 6:20*: *You are bought with a great price; glorify and bear God in your body.*

[Fourthly](#), because it redounded to man's greater dignity, that as man was overcome and deceived by the devil, so also it should be a man that should overthrow the devil; and as man deserved death, so a man by dying should vanquish death. Hence it is written (*1 Cor. 15:57*): *Thanks be to God Who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* It was accordingly more fitting that we should be delivered by Christ's Passion than simply by God's good-will.

Raymond E. Brown, "Dominant Motifs in the Johannine Crucifixion Scene"¹⁶

We saw that the motif of Jesus' kingship was pervasive in the trial of Jesus before Pilate. Since a false claim to kingship was the charge on which Jesus was tried and condemned, this motif naturally dominated the interrogation. But, more than this, the motif of kingship affected what was done to Jesus: he was attired as a king and hailed in mockery by the soldiers; he was presented to the people as a king by Pilate. It is not surprising then to find a certain continuity of the motif into the crucifixion scene.

The crucifixion itself, described in the Introduction, is an enthronement of Jesus, as Episode 1 makes clear when his royal title is proclaimed tri-lingually and thus internationally. Moreover, the burial of Jesus, described in the Conclusion, has features suggestive of royalty. B. Schwank may well be correct in stressing that the principal episodes of the crucifixion are concerned with the gifts that the enthroned king gives to those who accept his kingdom, for certainly these episodes have as a motif what Jesus does for the believer.

¹⁶ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 912-13.

The Johannine crucifixion scene is, in a certain way, less concerned with the fate of Jesus than with the significance of that fate for his followers. The crucifixion is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise in 13:1 that in "the hour" he would show to the very end his love for his own. Jesus dies as the model shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (10:11, 14–15), i.e., for those who hear his voice and know him.

Perhaps it would be useful to summarize here our understanding of the principal ideas found in the episodes of the crucifixion scene, for many of them are proposed through symbolism and would not be immediately apparent.

Episode 1 proclaims to the whole civilized world the kingship of Jesus. "The Jews" reject this claim, but the Gentile governor insists on its multilingual proclamation. Episode 2 is concerned with the symbolism of the seamless tunic, a priestly garment. Jesus is not only a king but also a priest whose death is an action offered for others. In Jesus' own words: "It is for them that I consecrate myself" (17:19). Episode 3 is centered on Jesus' lasting concern for the community of those whom he leaves behind (see also 17:9–19).

His mother, the symbol of the New Israel, was denied a role at Cana because his hour had not yet come.

Now that his hour has come, she is given a role as the mother of the Beloved Disciple, i.e., of the Christian. We are being told figuratively that Jesus was concerned for the community of believers who would be drawn to him now that he is lifted up from the earth on the cross (12:32). Episode 4 shows the death of Jesus as the completion of all that the Father had given him to do, a task described beforehand in the Scriptures. This episode ends by describing Jesus' death as his handing over the spirit—seemingly a symbolic way of indicating that Jesus' own Spirit will now take up the work of Jesus.

"If I do not go away, the Paraclete will never come to you" (16:7). Episode 5 continues the proleptic symbolism of the giving of the Spirit; for the flow of water colored with Jesus' dying blood fulfills the promise of 7:38–39: "As the Scripture says, 'From within him shall flow rivers of living water.' (Here he was referring to the Spirit . . .)." On a secondary level the flow of blood and water symbolizes the origin of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism through which the life of Jesus is communicated to the Christian. It is important to remember that during this episode Jesus is already dead.

In Johannine thought the drama of the cross does not end in death but in a flow of life that comes from death: the death of Jesus is the beginning of Christian life. The motif of the fulfillment of Scripture is also very prominent in the crucifixion scene. Specific passages are cited in Episodes 2 and 5; and it is stated that Episode 4 occurred that the Scripture might be brought to its complete fulfillment. *The Messiah-king motif of Episode 1 and the Mother Zion and New Eve symbolism of Episode 3 are also thoroughly scriptural.*

In this preoccupation with the OT background for the passion, John is probably reflecting the general early Christian concern to show the Jews that the crucifixion did not eliminate the possibility that Jesus was the promised Messiah but rather fulfilled God's words in Scripture. Nevertheless, the selection of the specific OT passages and themes as background for the crucifixion seems to have been done in the light of Johannine theological interest.

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

Eusebius of Caesarea, *Proof of the Gospel* 4.12.3*(He did not wait for, but pursued death)*

He cried out with a loud voice to the Father, “I commend my spirit” and freely departed from the body. He did not wait for death, which was lagging behind as it were in fear to come to him. Instead, *he pursued it from behind and drove it on and trampled it under his feet as it was fleeing*. He burst the eternal gates of death’s dark realms and made a road of return back again to life for the dead bound there with the bonds of death.

Romanus Melodus, *Kontakion on the Passion* 36.5–6 *(He suffers that Adam might dance)*

The martyr Abel was envied by Cain and later murdered.

This is what Christ also endured:

Though he desired this envious people,

He incited them to anger, while showing affection;

He healed those who were sick, and instead of gratitude, he suffers and is crucified,

In order that Adam might dance in celebration.

*The crowd of the lawless, feeling an antipathy towards the plethora of miracles
Cried out: “Kill! Crucify him!”*

The One who sustains all things was delivered over to Pilate;

They handed over to the court of justice

Him who will judge both kings and paupers;

The condemned judges the just Judge;

The one who lives in obscurity

Threatened to murder the Redeemer as a thief!

Meanwhile he, in order to suffer, endures so long, in silence, standing speechless,

In order that Adam might dance in celebration

St. Augustine, *Sermon* 382.2 *(They Cry, “Crucify Him!” He Prays, “Father, Forgive”)*

Look at the Lord who did precisely what he commanded. After so many things the godless Jews committed against him, repaying him evil for good, did he not say as he hung on the cross, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing”? He prayed as man, and as God with the Father, he heard the prayer. Even now he prays in us, for us and is prayed to by us.

He prays in us as our high priest. He prays for us as our head. He is prayed to by us as our God. When he was praying as he hung on the cross, he could see and foresee. He could see all his enemies. He could foresee that many of them would become his friends.

That is why he was interceding for them all. They were raging, but he was praying. They were saying to Pilate “Crucify,” but he was crying out, “Father, forgive.” He was hanging from the cruel nails, but he did not lose his gentleness. He was asking for pardon for those from whom he was receiving such hideous treatment.

St. Jerome, *Letter* 46.3 *(The Second Adam washed away the sins of the first)*

Well, then, to bring forward something still more out of place, we must go back to yet remoter times. *Tradition has it that in this city, in fact, on this very spot, Adam lived and died. The place where our Lord was crucified is called Calvary, because the skull of the first man was buried there.* So it came to pass that *the second Adam, that is, the blood of ...*

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued] ... *Christ, as it dropped from the cross, washed away the sins of the buried one who was first formed, the first Adam, and thus the words of the apostle were fulfilled: "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."*

St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew 4.27.59-60*

(New Tomb/Virginal Womb of Mary)

We are able to discern from the spiritual sense of Scripture that the body of the Lord must not be covered in gold nor in jewels and silk but in pure linen. This may also mean, however, that the one who wrapped Jesus in clean linen is he who received him with a pure mind.... *His body was placed in a new tomb lest it be imagined after the resurrection that one of the other interred bodies had arisen. The new tomb, however, may also signify Mary's virginal womb. The great stone was placed at the entrance to the tomb in order to show that it could not be opened without the help of several persons.*

St. Hilary of Poitiers, *On Matthew 23.7* (The Power of the Eternal Word)

The earth shook. For the earth could not hold this dead man. Rocks were split, for the Word of God and the power of his eternal goodness rushed in, penetrating every stronghold and principality. Graves were opened, for the gates of death had been unlocked. And a number of the bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep arose. Dispelling the shadows of death and illuminating the darkness of hell, Christ destroyed the spoils of death itself at the resurrection of the saints, who saw him immediately. The centurion and the guards who witnessed this disturbance of the entire natural order confessed him to be the Son of God.

St. Ambrose, *Letter 63.109-11* (Mary, the Royal Hall of the Crucified King)

Mary, the mother of the Lord, stood by her Son's cross. No one has taught me this but the holy Evangelist John. Others have related how the earth was shaken at the Lord's passion, the sky was covered with darkness, the sun withdrew itself and how the thief was, after a faithful confession, received into paradise. John tells us what the others have not told, how the Lord while fixed on the cross called to his mother. He thought it was more important that, victorious over his sufferings, Jesus gave her the offices of piety than that he gave her a heavenly kingdom. For if it is the mark of religion to grant pardon to the thief, it is a mark of much greater piety that a mother is honored with such affection by her Son. "Behold," he says, "your son." ... "*Behold your mother.*" Christ testified from the cross and divided the offices of piety between the mother and the disciple....

Nor was Mary below what was becoming the mother of Christ. When the apostles fled, she stood at the cross and with pious eyes beheld her Son's wounds. For she did not look to the death of her offspring but to the salvation of the world. Or perhaps, because that "*royal hall*"¹⁷ knew that the redemption of the world would be through the death of her Son, she thought that by her death she also might add something to that universal gift ...

TOPIC #7- THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

¹⁷ A favorite expression of Ambrose emphasizing Mary as the bearer of the divine king.

[Continued] ... But Jesus did not need a helper for the redemption of all, who saved all without a helper. This is why he says, "I am counted among those who go down to the pit. I am like those who have no help." He received indeed the affection of his mother but sought not another's help. Imitate her, holy mothers, who in her only dearly beloved Son set forth so great an example of maternal virtue. For neither have you sweeter children, nor did the Virgin seek the consolation of being able to bear another son.

Blessed John Paul II, *Redemptoris Hominis* ("The Cross is the Church's Daily Life")

§7. The Church does not cease to listen to [Christ's] words. She rereads them continually. With the greatest devotion she reconstructs every detail of his life. These words are listened to also by non-Christians. The life of Christ speaks, also, to many who are not capable of repeating with Peter: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" He, the Son of the living God, speaks to people also as Man: it is his life that speaks, his humanity, his fidelity to the truth, his all-embracing love. Furthermore, his death on the Cross speaks—that is to say the inscrutable depth of his suffering and abandonment. *The Church never ceases to relive his death on the Cross and his Resurrection, which constitute the content of the Church's daily life.*

Indeed, it is by the command of Christ himself, her Master, that the Church unceasingly celebrates the Eucharist, finding in it the "fountain of life and holiness," the efficacious sign of grace and reconciliation with God, and the pledge of eternal life. The Church lives his mystery, draws unwearingly from it and continually seeks ways of bringing this mystery of her Master and Lord to humanity—to the peoples, the nations, the succeeding generations, and every individual human being—as if she were ever repeating, as the Apostle did: "*For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*" The Church stays within the sphere of the mystery of the Redemption, which has become the fundamental principle of her life and mission.

Blessed John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* ("Behold Your Mother")

§23. If John's description of the event at Cana presents Mary's caring motherhood at the beginning of Christ's messianic activity, another passage from the same Gospel confirms this motherhood in the salvific *economy of grace at its crowning moment*, namely when Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, his Paschal Mystery, is accomplished. John's description is concise: "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother: 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:25-27).

Undoubtedly, we find here an expression of the Son's particular solicitude for his Mother, whom he is leaving in such great sorrow. And yet the "*testament of Christ's Cross*" says more. Jesus highlights a new relationship between Mother and Son, the whole truth and reality of which he solemnly confirms. *One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it is clearly stated and established. It emerges from the definitive accomplishment of the Redeemer's Paschal Mystery ...*

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued] ...The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery - a *mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity - is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind.*

The man at the foot of the Cross is John, "*the disciple whom he loved.*" But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Council does not hesitate to call Mary "*the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind*": since she "*belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings.... Indeed she is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ...since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful.'*"

And so this "new motherhood of Mary," generated by faith, is the fruit of the "new" love which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son.

SPECIAL EXCURSUS: DETAILED OUTLINE OF JOHN 18:1-19:42

A. 18:1-27 THE ARREST AND INTERROGATION OF JESUS

18:1-11 The Arrest of Jesus

18:1-3: Judas, the Betrayer, enters the garden with the band of soldiers

18:4-8: Jesus meets the arresting party and *reveals* His power.

18:9: *I have not lost one*

18:10-11: Peter reacts to the arrest by striking at the servant

18:12-13 Change of scene, closing the first unit and opening the second, as Jesus is taken from the garden to Annas

18:14-27 The interrogation of Jesus

18:14: Expedient that one man should die

18:15-18: Introduction of Peter into high priest's palace; *first* denial

18:19-23: Annas interrogates Jesus who protests his innocence

18:24: Jesus sent bound, from Annas to Caiaphas

18:25-27: Peter's *second* and *third* denials

TOPIC #7 – THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

B. 18:28–19:6A THE TRIAL OF JESUS BEFORE PILATE

Seven Scenes in a Chiastic Structure

(Ignace De La Potterie, *Hour of Jesus*, p. 58)

- A. (Outside) Pilate and the Jews [1st Dialogue: *What accusation...?*] (18:28-32)
- B. (Inside) Pilate and Jesus: *The Kingship of Jesus* (18:33-38)
- C. (Outside) Pilate and the Jews [2nd Dialogue: *Barabbas*] (18:38-40)
- D. CORONATION (19:1-3)**
- C¹. (Outside) Pilate and the Jews [3rd Dialogue: *Ecce Homo*] (19:4-7)
- B¹. (Inside) Pilate and Jesus [Pilate's Power] (19:8-12)
- A¹. (Outside) Pilate and the Jews [Final Dialogue: *Behold Your King*] (19:13-16)

C. 19:16B–42 THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL OF JESUS

19:16b-18 Introduction: *Via Crucis* and the crucifixion

19:19–22 **Episode 1:**

The King of the Jews – Pilate and the Royal Inscription

19: 23-24 **Episode 2:**

The Seamless Tunic – The executioners divide Jesus' garments

19:25-27 **Episode 3:**

Behold thy Mother! – Jesus gives his Mother to the Beloved Disciple
and the Beloved Disciple to His Mother

19:28-29 **Episode 4:**

I Thirst – Jesus' cry of thirst; the executioners offer him wine

19:30 **Episode 5:**

It is Finished – Jesus hands over his spirit.

19:31-35 **Episode 6:**

Blood and Water – Pilate and the breaking of Jesus' legs;
Blood and water flow from Jesus' side

19:36-38 **Episode 7:**

Behold the Pierced One

19:38-42 Conclusion: The burial of Jesus by Joseph and Nicodemus

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES

OPENING REFLECTION: POPE LEO XIII

The more you have at heart the honor of Mary, and the welfare of human society, the more diligently apply yourselves to nourish the piety of the people towards the great Virgin, and to increase their confidence in her. We believe it to be part of the designs of Providence that, in these times of trial for the Church, the ancient devotion to the august Virgin should live and flourish amid the greatest part of the Christian world. May now the Christian nations, excited by Our exhortations, and inflamed by your appeals, seek the protection of Mary with an ardour growing greater day by day; let them cling more and more to the practice of the Rosary, to that devotion which our ancestors were in the habit of practicing, not only as an ever-ready remedy for their misfortunes, but as a whole badge of Christian piety. The heavenly Patroness of the human race will receive with joy these prayers and supplications, and will easily obtain that the good shall grow in virtue, and that the erring should return to salvation and repent; and that God who is the avenger of crime, moved to mercy and pity may deliver Christendom and civil society from all dangers, and restore to them peace so much desired.

- Pope Leo XIII, *Upremi Apostolatus Officio* (“On Devotion of the Rosary”) 1883

The Glorious Mysteries

1. The Resurrection (*Matt. 28:1-15 / Mark 16:1-18 / Luke 24:1-49 / John 20:1-21:25*)
2. The Ascension (*Acts 1:1-11 / Mark 16:19-20 / Luke 24:50-53*)
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:1-41*)
4. The Assumption of Mary (*Psalm 132:8 / Luke 1:28 / Rev. 12:1-6*)
5. The Crowning of Mary (*Luke 1:43 / I Kings 1:16, 31; 2:17, 20*)

1. The Resurrection

(*Matt. 28:1-15 / Mark 16:1-18 / Luke 24:1-49 / John 20:1-21:25*)

A. SCRIPTURE (*MATT. 28:1-15; CF. MARK 16:1-18; LUKE 24:1-49; JOHN 20:1-21:25*)

¹ Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hail!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Christ’s Descent into Hell

CCC 632 The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was “raised from the dead” presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection (*Acts* 3:15; *Rom* 8:11; *1 Cor* 15:20; cf. *Heb* 13:20). This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ’s descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there (*1 Pet* 3:18–19.).

CCC 633 Scripture calls the abode of the dead, to which the dead Christ went down, “hell”—*Sheol* in Hebrew or *Hades* in Greek—because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God (*Phil* 2:10; *Acts* 2:24; *Rev* 1:18; *Eph* 4:9; *Pss* 6:6; 88:11–13.). Such is the case for all the dead, whether evil or righteous, while they await the redeemer: which does not mean that their lot is identical, as Jesus shows through the parable of the poor man Lazarus who was received into “Abraham’s bosom” (Cf. *Pss* 89:49; *1 Sam* 28:19; *Ezek* 32:17–32; *Lk* 16:22–26): “It is precisely these holy souls, who awaited their Savior in Abraham’s bosom, whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into hell.” Jesus did not descend into hell to deliver the damned, nor to destroy the hell of damnation, *but to free the just who had gone before him.*

CCC 634 “The gospel was preached even to the dead” (*1 Pet.* 4:6). *The descent into hell brings the Gospel message of salvation to complete fulfillment.* This is the last phase of Jesus’ messianic mission, a phase which is condensed in time but vast in its real significance: *the spread of Christ’s redemptive work to all men of all times and all places, for all who are saved have been made sharers in the redemption.*

CCC 635 Christ went down into the depths of death so that “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (*Jn* 5:25; cf. *Mt* 12:40; *Rom* 10:7; *Eph* 4:9). Jesus, “the Author of life,” by dying destroyed “him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.” Henceforth the risen Christ holds “the keys of Death and Hades,” so that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (*Rev.* 1:18):

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued]

Today a great silence reigns on earth, a great silence and a great stillness. A great silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began.... He has gone to search for Adam, our first father, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam in his bonds and Eve, captive with him—He who is both their God and the son of Eve.... “I am your God, who for your sake have become your son.... I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead.”

- Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday

The Historical and Transcendent Event of the Resurrection

CCC 639 The mystery of Christ’s resurrection is a real event, with manifestations that were historically verified, as the New Testament bears witness. In about A.D. 56, St. Paul could already write to the Corinthians: “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve ...”(1 Cor. 15:3-4) The Apostle speaks here of the living tradition of the Resurrection which he had learned after his conversion at the gates of Damascus.

The empty tomb

CCC 640 “*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.*” The first element we encounter in the framework of the Easter events is the empty tomb. In itself it is not a direct proof of Resurrection; the absence of Christ’s body from the tomb could be explained otherwise. Nonetheless the empty tomb was still an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection. This was the case, first with the holy women, and then with Peter. The disciple “whom Jesus loved” affirmed that when he entered the empty tomb and discovered “the linen cloths lying there,” “he saw and believed.” This suggests that he realized from the empty tomb’s condition that the absence of Jesus’ body could not have been of human doing and that Jesus had not simply returned to earthly life as had been the case with Lazarus.

The appearances of the Risen One

CCC 641 Mary Magdalene and the holy women who came to finish anointing the body of Jesus, which had been buried in haste because the Sabbath began on the evening of Good Friday, were the first to encounter the Risen One. Thus the women were the first messengers of Christ’s Resurrection for the apostles themselves. They were the next to whom Jesus appears: first Peter, then the Twelve. Peter had been called to strengthen the faith of his brothers, and so sees the Risen One before them; it is on the basis of his testimony that the community exclaims: “*The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!*”

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

CCC 642 *Everything that happened during those Paschal days involves each of the apostles—and Peter in particular—in the building of the new era begun on Easter morning.* As witnesses of the Risen One, they remain the foundation stones of his Church. The faith of the first community of believers is based on the witness of concrete men known to the Christians and for the most part still living among them. Peter and the Twelve are the primary “witnesses to his Resurrection,” but they are not the only ones—Paul speaks clearly of more than five hundred persons to whom Jesus appeared on a single occasion and also of James and of all the apostles.

CCC 643 *Given all these testimonies, Christ’s Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples’ faith was drastically put to the test by their master’s Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold.* The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized (“looking sad”) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an “idle tale.” When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, “he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.”

CCC 644 Even when faced with the reality of the risen Jesus the disciples are still doubtful, so impossible did the thing seem: they thought they were seeing a ghost. “In their joy they were still disbelieving and still wondering.” Thomas will also experience the test of doubt and St. Matthew relates that during the risen Lord’s last appearance in Galilee “some doubted.” *Therefore the hypothesis that the Resurrection was produced by the apostles’ faith (or credulity) will not hold up. On the contrary their faith in the Resurrection was born, under the action of divine grace, from their direct experience of the reality of the risen Jesus.*

The Condition of Christ’s Risen Humanity

CCC 646 Christ’s Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus’ daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus’ power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again. Christ’s Resurrection is essentially different. In his risen body he passes from the state of death to another life beyond time and space. At Jesus’ Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is “the man of heaven.”

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

The Meaning and Saving Significance of the Resurrection

CCC 651 *“If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.”* The Resurrection above all constitutes the confirmation of all Christ’s works and teachings. All truths, even those most inaccessible to human reason, find their justification if Christ by his Resurrection has given the definitive proof of his divine authority, which he had promised.

CCC 652 Christ’s Resurrection is the fulfillment of the promises both of the Old Testament and of Jesus himself during his earthly life. The phrase “in accordance with the Scriptures” indicates that Christ’s Resurrection fulfilled these predictions.

CCC 653 The truth of Jesus’ divinity is confirmed by his Resurrection. He had said: “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he.” The Resurrection of the crucified one shows that he was truly “I Am,” the Son of God and God himself. So St. Paul could declare to the Jews: “What God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’” Christ’s Resurrection is closely linked to the Incarnation of God’s Son and is its fulfillment in accordance with God’s eternal plan.

CCC 654 *The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life.* This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God’s grace, “so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace. It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ’s brethren, as Jesus himself called his disciples after his Resurrection: “Go and tell my brethren.” *We are brethren not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains us a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection.*

CCC 655 *Finally, Christ’s Resurrection—and the risen Christ himself—is the principle and source of our future resurrection: “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”* The risen Christ lives in the hearts of his faithful while they await that fulfillment. In Christ, Christians “have tasted ... the powers of the age to come” and their lives are swept up by Christ into the heart of divine life, so that they may “live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.Q LIII.ad.1

I answer that, It behoved Christ to rise again, for five reasons.

First of all, for the commendation of Divine Justice, to which it belongs to exalt them who humble themselves for God’s sake, according to Luke 1:52: *He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.* Consequently, because Christ humbled Himself even to the death of the Cross, from love and obedience to God, it behoved Him to be uplifted by God to a glorious resurrection; hence it is said in His Person (*Psa. 138:2*): *Thou hast known, i.e., approved, my sitting down, i.e., My*

humiliation and Passion, *and my rising up, i.e., My glorification in the resurrection*; as the gloss expounds.

Secondly, for our instruction in the faith, since our belief in Christ's Godhead is confirmed by His rising again, because, according to *2 Cor. 13:4, although He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God*. And therefore it is written (*1 Cor. 15:14*): *If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain*: and (*Ps. 29:10*): *What profit is there in my blood? that is, in the shedding of My blood, while I go down, as by various degrees of evils, into corruption?* As though He were to answer: *None*. 'For if I do not at once rise again, but My body be corrupted, I shall preach to no one, I shall gain no one,' as the gloss expounds.

Thirdly, for the raising of our hope, since through seeing Christ, Who is our head, rise again, we hope that we likewise shall rise again. Hence it is written (*1 Cor. 15:12*): *Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* And (*Job 19:25, 27*): *I know, that is with certainty of faith, that my Redeemer, i.e., Christ, liveth, having risen from the dead; and therefore in the last day I shall rise out of the earth: ... this my hope is laid up in my bosom.*

Fourthly, to set in order the lives of the faithful: according to *Rom. 6:4: As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life*: and further on; *Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more; so do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive to God*.

Fifthly, in order to complete the work of our salvation: because, just as for this reason did He endure evil things in dying that He might deliver us from evil, so was He glorified in rising again in order to advance us towards good things; according to *Rom. 4:25: He was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification*.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John 12:1* (*The Eucharistic Assembly*)

With good reason, then, are we accustomed to have sacred meetings in churches on the eighth day. And, to adopt the language of allegory, as the idea necessarily demands, we indeed close the doors, but Christ still visits us and appears to us all, both invisibly as God and visibly in the body. He allows us to touch his holy flesh and gives it to us. *For through the grace of God we are admitted to partake of the blessed Eucharist, receiving Christ into our hands, to the intent that we may firmly believe that he did in truth raise up the temple of his body ... Participation in the divine mysteries, in addition to filling us with divine blessedness, is a true confession and memorial of Christ's dying and rising again for us and for our sake*. Let us, therefore, after touching Christ's body, avoid all unbelief in him as utter ruin and rather be found well-grounded in the full assurance of faith.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke 24 (Jesus is Life)*

The women came to the sepulcher, and when they could not find the body of Christ—for he had risen—they were quite perplexed. And what followed? For the sake of their love and zeal for Christ, they were counted worthy of seeing holy angels who then told them the joyful news as the heralds of the resurrection, saying, "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!*"

The Word of God ever lives and by his own nature is life. Yet, when he humbled and emptied himself, submitting to be made like us, he tasted death. But this proved to be the death of death, for he rose from the dead to be the way by which not so much he himself but rather we could return to incorruption ...

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued] ...Let no one seek among the dead him who ever lives. But if he is not here, with mortality and in the tomb, where then is he? Obviously, in heaven and in godlike glory.

St. Augustine, *Sermon 232.2.*

(Humanity's Fall - Through a Woman Now Restored Through Women)

The women came to the tomb, but they didn't find the body in the tomb. Instead, they were told by angels that Christ had risen. The women reported this to men. And what's written? What did you hear? These things seemed in their eyes like an idle tale. How very unhappy is the human condition! When Eve related what the serpent had said, she was listened to straightaway. A lying woman was believed, and so we all died. But [the disciples] didn't believe women telling the truth so that we might live. *If women are not to be trusted, why did Adam trust Eve? If women are to be trusted, why did the disciples not trust the holy women?*

So in this fact we have to reflect on the goodness of the Lord's arrangements, because this, of course, was the doing of the Lord Jesus Christ that it should be the female sex which would be the first to report that he had risen again. *Humanity fell through the female sex; humankind was restored through the female sex. A Virgin gave birth to Christ; a woman proclaimed that he had risen again. Through a woman death, through a woman life.*

St. Augustine, *Sermon 235.2-3*

(Jesus is to Be Recognized in the Breaking of the Bread)

"We," they said, "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." *O my dear disciples, you had hoped! So now you no longer hope? Look, Christ is alive! Is hope dead in you? Certainly, certainly, Christ is alive! Christ, being alive, found the hearts of his disciples dead, as he appeared and did not appear to their eyes. He was at one and the same time seen and concealed. I mean, if he wasn't seen, how could they have heard him questioning them and answered his questions?*

He was walking with them along the road like a companion and was himself the leader. Of course he was seen, but he wasn't recognized. For their eyes were restrained, as we heard, so that they wouldn't recognize him. They weren't restrained so that they wouldn't see him, but they were held so that they wouldn't recognize him.

Ah yes, brothers and sisters, but where did the Lord wish to be recognized? In the breaking of bread. We're all right, nothing to worry about—we break bread, and we recognize the Lord. It was for our sake that he didn't want to be recognized anywhere but there, because we weren't going to see him in the flesh, and yet we were going to eat his flesh.

So if you're a believer, any of you, if you're not called a Christian for nothing, if you don't come to church pointlessly, if you listen to the Word of God in fear and hope, you may take comfort in the breaking of bread. The Lord's absence is not an absence. Have faith, and the one you cannot see is with you. Those two, even when the Lord was talking to them, did not have faith, because they didn't believe he had risen. Nor did they have any hope that he could rise again. They had lost faith, lost hope. They were walking along, dead, with Christ alive. They were walking along, dead, with life itself. Life was walking along with them, but in their hearts life had not yet been restored.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

St. Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies* 26 (*Incorruptible but Touchable*)

*The Lord's body that made its entrance to the disciples through closed doors was the same as that which issued before the eyes of people from the Virgin's closed womb at his birth. Is it surprising if he who was now going to live forever made his entrance through closed doors after his resurrection, who on his coming in order to die made his appearance from the unopened womb of a virgin? But because the faith of those who beheld it wavered concerning the body they could see, he showed them at once his hands and his side, offering them the body that he brought in through the closed doors to touch. By this action he revealed two wonderful, and according to human reason quite contradictory, things. *He showed them that after his resurrection his body was both incorruptible and yet could be touched ... By showing us that it is incorruptible, he would urge us on toward our reward, and by offering it as touchable he would dispose us toward faith.* He manifested himself as both incorruptible and touchable to show us that his body after his resurrection was of the same nature as ours but of a different sort of glory.*

N.T. Wright, *On the Resurrection*¹⁸

The resurrection completes the inauguration of God's kingdom. . . . It is the decisive event demonstrating that God's kingdom really has been launched on earth as it is in heaven.

Without the resurrection there is one way of telling the story; with the resurrection there is a whole other way. Without the resurrection, the story is an unfinished and potentially tragic drama in which Israel can hold on to hope but with an increasing sense that the narrative is spinning out of control.

Without the resurrection, even the story of Jesus is a tragedy, certainly in first-century Jewish terms, as the two on the road to Emmaus knew very well. But with the resurrection there is a new way of telling the entire story. The resurrection isn't just a surprise happy ending for one person; it is instead the turning point for everything else.

It is the point at which all the old promises can come true at last: the promises of David's unshakable kingdom; the promises of Israel's return from the greatest exile of them all; and behind that again, quite explicit in Matthew, Luke, and John, the promise that all the nations will now be blessed through the seed of Abraham . . .

The point of the resurrection . . . is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die . . . What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it . . . What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether . . . They are part of what we may call building for God's kingdom.

⁵³² N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper, 2008), 236ff.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Prayer]

Marian Prayer of Blessed John Paul II

Mother of the Redeemer,

with great joy we call you blessed.

In order to carry out His plan of salvation,
God the Father chose you before the creation of the world.
You believed in His love and obeyed His word.
The Son of God desired you for His Mother
when He became man to save the human race.

You received Him with ready obedience and undivided heart.
The Holy Spirit loved you as His mystical spouse
and filled you with singular gifts.
You allowed yourself to be led
by His hidden powerful action.

On the eve of the third Christian Millennium,
we entrust to you the Church
which acknowledges you and invokes you as Mother.
*To you, Mother of human family and of the nations,
we confidently entrust the whole humanity,
with its hopes and fears.*

Do not let it lack the light of true wisdom.
Guide its steps in the ways of peace.
*Enable all to meet Christ,
the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith
and obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Mother of God
and our Mother, Mary!

2. The Ascension

(Acts 1:1-11 / Mark 16:19-20 / Luke 24:50-53)

(Mark 16:19-20)

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen.

(Luke 24:50-53)

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

(Acts 1:1-11)

¹ In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. ⁴ And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, ⁵ for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” ⁹ And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

CCC 659 “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Christ’s body was glorified at the moment of his Resurrection, as proved by the new and supernatural properties it subsequently and permanently enjoys. *But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity.* Jesus’ final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God’s right hand.

CCC 660 The veiled character of the glory of the Risen One during this time is intimated in his mysterious words to Mary Magdalene: “I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” *This indicates a difference in manifestation between the glory of the risen Christ and that of the Christ exalted to the Father’s right hand, a transition marked by the historical and transcendent event of the Ascension.*

CCC 661 This final stage stays closely linked to the first, that is, to his descent from heaven in the Incarnation. Only the one who “came from the Father” can return to the Father: Christ Jesus. “No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.” *Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the “Father’s house,” to God’s life and happiness. Only Christ can open to man such access that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us.*

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

CCC 662 “*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.*” The lifting up of Jesus on the cross signifies and announces his lifting up by his Ascension into heaven, and indeed begins it. Jesus Christ, the one priest of the new and eternal Covenant, “entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands ... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” *There Christ permanently exercises his priesthood, for he “always lives to make intercession” for “those who draw near to God through him.”* As “high priest of the good things to come” he is the center and the principal actor of the liturgy that honors the Father in heaven.

CCC 663 Henceforth Christ is *seated at the right hand of the Father*: “By ‘the Father’s right hand’ we understand *the glory and honor of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate and his flesh was glorified.*”

CCC 664 Being seated at the Father’s right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah’s kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel’s vision concerning the Son of man: “*To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*” After this event the apostles became witnesses of the “kingdom [that] will have no end.”

CCC 965 After her Son’s Ascension, Mary “aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers (LG 69). In her association with the apostles and several women, “we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation” (LG 59).

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* III.Q LVII.1 ad.3

Although Christ’s bodily presence was withdrawn from the faithful by the Ascension, still the presence of His Godhead is ever with the faithful, as He Himself says (Matth. 28:20): *Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* For, *by ascending into heaven He did not desert those whom He adopted*, as Pope Leo says (*De Resurrec., Serm., ii.*). But Christ’s Ascension into heaven, whereby He withdrew His bodily presence from us, was more profitable for us than His bodily presence would have been.

First of all, in order to increase our faith, which is of things unseen. Hence our Lord said (*John 16*) that the Holy Ghost shall come and *convince the world ... of justice*, that is, of the justice of those that believe, as Augustine says (*Tract. xcvi. super Joan.*): *For even to put the faithful beside the unbeliever is to put the unbeliever to shame*; wherefore He goes on to say: *‘Because I go to the Father; and you shall see Me no longer’*:—*For ‘blessed are they that see not, yet believe.’ Hence it is of our justice that the world is reprov’d: because ‘you will believe in Me Whom you shall not see.’*

Secondly, to uplift our hope: hence He says (*John 14:3*): *If I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to Myself; that where I am, you also may be.* For by placing in heaven the human nature which He assumed, Christ gave us the hope of going thither; since *wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together*, as is written in *Matt. 24:28*. Hence it is written likewise (*Mich. 2:13*): *He shall go up that shall open the way before them ...*

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued] ... **Thirdly**, in order to direct the fervour of our charity to heavenly things. Hence the Apostle says (Col. 3:1, 2): *Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth;* for as is said (Matt. 6:21): *Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.* And since the Holy Ghost is love drawing us up to heavenly things, therefore our Lord said to His disciples (John 16:7): *It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.* On which words Augustine says (Tract. xciv. super Joan.): *Ye cannot receive the Spirit, so long as ye persist in knowing Christ according to the flesh. But when Christ withdrew in body, not only the Holy Ghost, but both Father and Son were present with them spiritually.*

Eadmer of Canterbury, *De excellentia* 6

Oh, if she had joy while her Son was still living with her in the flesh, if she had joy when her Son rose from the dead after trampling death underfoot, did she rejoice with lesser joy when her Son entered heaven in the flesh that, as she well knew, had been taken from her?

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 29, On the Son* (*We Ascend with Him*)

He dies, but he makes alive and by death destroys death. He is buried, yet he rises again. He goes down to Hades, yet he leads souls up, ascends to heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead, and to probe discussions like these.

St. Leo the Great, *Sermon 74.1–2* (*Our Human Nature Is Carried Up*)

And so while at Easter it was the Lord's resurrection which was the cause of our joy, our present rejoicing is due to his ascension into heaven. With all due solemnity we are commemorating that day on which our poor human nature was carried up in Christ above all the hosts of heaven, above all the ranks of angels, beyond those heavenly powers to the very throne of God the Father. It is upon this ordered structure of divine acts that we have been firmly established, so that the grace of God may show itself still more marvelous when, in spite of the withdrawal from our sight of everything that is rightly felt to command our reverence, faith does not fail, hope is not shaken, charity does not grow cold ... *It was in order that we might be capable of such blessedness that on the fortieth day after his resurrection, after he had made careful provision for everything concerning the preaching of the gospel and the mysteries of the new covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ was taken up to heaven before the eyes of his disciples, and so his bodily presence among them came to an end.* From that time onward he was to remain at the Father's right hand until the completion of the period ordained by God for the church's children to increase and multiply, after which, in the same body with which he ascended, he will come again to judge the living and the dead. And so our redeemer's visible presence has passed into the sacraments. Our faith is nobler and stronger because empirical sight has been replaced by a reliable teaching whose authority is accepted by believing hearts, enlightened from on high.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 30 (*Stephen's Vision of the Ascended Christ*)

It is the Son, too, who ascends to the heights of heaven, and also descends to the inner parts of the earth (*Eph.4:9*) “He sits at the Father’s right hand” (*Rev. 3:21*) —not the Father at his own. He is seen by Stephen at his martyrdom by stoning, still sitting at the right hand of God (Cf. *Acts 7:55–56*), where he will continue to sit, until the Father shall make his enemies his footstool (*Psa. 110:1*). He will come again on the clouds of heaven, just as he appeared when he ascended into heaven.

Venerable Bede, *Exposition on the Gospel of Mark* 2.8. (*Present on Earth While at the Father’s Right Hand*)

Because he who was taken up into heaven is both God and a human being, he remains on earth with the saints in the humanity which he took from the earth, but in the divinity with which he fills earth and heaven equally he remains “*all days, even to the consummation of the world.*” From this it is understood that even up to the end, *the world will not lack those in whom there will be divine abiding and indwelling.* Nor should we doubt that those struggling in this world will deserve to have Christ abiding in their hearts as a guest, and will abide with Christ in his kingdom after the contests of this world. Nevertheless [the Divine majesty] is present for the elect in the grace of his benevolent protection, by which he draws them, *guiding each one individually by his present gifts and chastisements to the possession of their future inheritance as a father guides his children.*

Ambrosian Hymn Writer: *Easter Hymn, At the Lamb’s High Feast* 1–5.

*At the Lamb’s high feast we sing
Praise to our victorious King,
Who has washed us in the tide
Flowing from his pierced side.
Praise we him whose love divine
Gives the guests his blood for wine,
Gives his body for the feast,
Love the victim, love the priest.
Where the Paschal blood is poured,
Death’s dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel’s hosts triumphant go
Through the wave that drowns the foe.
Christ, the Lamb whose blood was shed,
Paschal victim, Paschal bread;
With sincerity and love
Eat we manna from above.
Mighty victim from the sky,
Powers of hell beneath you lie;
Death is conquered in the fight;
You have brought us life and light.
Alleluia!*

3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit

*(Acts 2:1-41)***The Dawn of the Age of the Church**

CCC 1076 *The Church was made manifest to the world on the day of Pentecost by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (SC 6; LG 2). The gift of the Spirit ushers in a new era in the “dispensation of the mystery”—the age of the Church, during which Christ manifests, makes present, and communicates his work of salvation through the liturgy of his Church, “until he comes.”* In this age of the Church Christ now lives and acts in and with his Church, in a new way appropriate to this new age. He acts through the sacraments in what the common Tradition of the East and the West calls “the sacramental economy”; this is the communication (or “dispensation”) of the fruits of Christ’s Paschal mystery in the celebration of the Church’s “sacramental” liturgy.

Mary, Mother of the ‘Whole Christ’

CCC 726 At the end of this mission of the Spirit, Mary became the Woman, the new Eve (“mother of the living”), the mother of the “whole Christ” (*John 19:25-27*). As such, she was present with the Twelve, who “with one accord devoted themselves to prayer (*Acts 1:14*), at the dawn of the “end time” which the Spirit was to inaugurate on the morning of Pentecost with the manifestation of the Church.

The Spirit and the Church

CCC 731 On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ’s Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance.

CCC 732 *On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed.* Since that day, the Kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him: in the humility of the flesh and in faith, they already share in the communion of the Holy Trinity. By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the “last days,” the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated.

We have seen the true Light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith: we adore the indivisible Trinity, who has saved us.

- Byzantine liturgy, Pentecost, Vespers, *Troparion*, repeated after communion.

The Holy Spirit and the Church

CCC 737 The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ’s faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *prepares* men and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit *manifests* the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his Death and Resurrection. He *makes present* the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to *bring them into communion* with God, that they may “bear much fruit” (*John 15:8, 16*).

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

CCC 738 Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.

CCC 739 Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal, and organize them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body.

CCC 740 These "mighty works of God," offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church, bear their fruit in the new life in Christ, according to the Spirit.

CCC 741 "*The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with sighs too deep for words.*" The Holy Spirit, the artisan of God's works, is the master of prayer.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lecture 17.18* (*New Wine of the New Covenant*)

For in truth the wine was new, the grace of the New Testament. But this new wine was from a spiritual vine, which already had often borne fruit in the prophets and sprouted forth in the New Testament. For just as in the order of nature the vine, remaining ever the same, brings forth new fruit according to the seasons, so too the same Spirit, remaining what he is, having wrought in the prophets, now manifested something new and marvelous. *His grace had indeed been granted to the fathers in times past, but now it came in superabundance; in their case they received a share of the Holy Spirit, now they were baptized in all fullness.*

St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 4* (*The Ingathering*)

Do you see the type? What is this Pentecost? The time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest and the fruits to be gathered. Look at the reality now, how the time has come to ply the sickle of the Word. The Spirit, keen-edged, came down in place of the sickle. For hear the words of Christ, "*Lift up your eyes and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.*" And again, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*" He himself, taking [our nature] as the first fruits, lifted it up high and he was himself the first to ply the sickle. For this reason he calls [the Word] also the Seed.

St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 6.3* (*Unity and Diversity*)

Therefore, when he sent the Holy Spirit he manifested him visibly in two ways—by a dove and by fire: by a dove upon the Lord when he was baptized, by fire upon the disciples when they were gathered together ... The dove shows that those who are sanctified by the Spirit should be without guile. That their simplicity should not continue cold is shown us by the fire. Nor let it trouble you that the tongues were divided; for tongues are diverse, therefore the appearance was that of cloven tongues. "*Cloven tongues,*" it said, "*as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*" There is a diversity of tongues, but the diversity of tongues does not imply schisms. Do not be afraid of separation in the cloven tongues, *but in the dove recognize unity.*

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

Pope Benedict XVI, “Whoever is near to me, is near to the fire” (Pentecost 2010)

A Father of the Church, Origen, in one of his *Homilies on Jeremiah*, cites a saying attributed to Jesus, not contained in the sacred Scriptures but perhaps authentic, which reads: “*Whoever is near to me, is near to the fire*” (Homily on Jeremiah, L. I [III]).

In Christ, in fact, there is the fullness of God, who in the Bible is compared to fire. We just observed that the flame of the Holy Spirit blazes but does not burn. And nevertheless it enacts a transformation, and thus must also consume something in man, the waste that corrupts him and hinders his relations with God and neighbour. This effect of the divine fire, however, frightens us; we are afraid of being “scorched” and prefer to stay just as we are. This is because our life is often based on the logic of having, of possessing and not the logic of self-gift.

Many people believe in God and admire the person of Jesus Christ, but when they are asked to lose something of themselves, then they retreat; they are afraid of the demands of faith. There is the fear of giving up something pleasant to which we are attached; the fear that following Christ deprives us of freedom, of certain experiences, of a part of ourselves. On the one hand, we want to be with Jesus, follow him closely, and, on the other, we are afraid of the consequences entailed.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are always in need of hearing the Lord Jesus tell us what he often repeated to his friends: “*Be not afraid.*” Like Simon Peter and the others we must allow his presence and his grace to transform our heart, which is always subject to human weakness. We must know how to recognize that losing something indeed, losing ourselves for the true God, the God of love and of life is actually gaining ourselves, finding ourselves more fully. Whoever entrusts himself to Jesus already experiences in this life the peace and joy of heart that the world cannot give, and that it cannot even take away once God has given it to us.

So it is worthwhile to let ourselves be touched by the fire of the Holy Spirit! The suffering that it causes us is necessary for our transformation. It is the reality of the Cross. It is not without reason that in the language of Jesus “fire” is above all a representation of the mystery of the Cross, without which Christianity does not exist. Thus enlightened and comforted by these words of life, let us lift up our invocation:

Come, Holy Spirit! Enkindle in us the fire of your love! We know that this is a bold prayer, with which we ask to be touched by God's flame; but above all we know that this flame and it alone has the power to save us. We do not want, in defending our life, to lose eternal life that God wants to give us. We need the fire of the Holy Spirit, because only Love redeems. Amen.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[PRAYER]

Pope Leo XIII, *It is Sweet Music*

It is sweet music to the ear to say:

I honor you, O Mother!

It is a sweet song to repeat:

I honor you, O holy Mother!

You are my delight, dear hope, and chaste love,
my strength in all adversities.

If my spirit that is troubled
and stricken by passions
suffers from the painful burden
of sadness and weeping,
if you see your child overwhelmed by misfortune,

O gracious Virgin Mary,
let me find rest in your motherly embrace.

But alas,
already the last day is quickly approaching.

Banish the demon to the infernal depths,
and stay closer, dear Mother,
to your aged and erring child.

With a gentle touch,
cover the wary pupils
and kindly consign to God
the soul that is returning to him. Amen.

4. The Assumption of Mary

(Psalm 132:8 / Luke 1:28 / Rev. 12:1-6)

(REV. 12:1-6; CF. PSALM 132:8 / LUKE 1:28)

¹ And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; ² she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. ³ And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. ⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; ⁵ she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶ and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

CCC 966 “Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death” (*LG* 59; cf. *Rev* 19:16). The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:

In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death.

- Byzantine Liturgy, *Troparion*, Feast of the Dormition, August 15th.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III.Q XXVII.a.1

(Whether the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before her birth from the womb?)

I answer that, Nothing is handed down in the canonical Scriptures concerning the sanctification of the Blessed Mary as to her being sanctified in the womb; indeed, they do not even mention her birth. But as Augustine, in his tractate on the Assumption of the Virgin, argues with reason, since her body was assumed into heaven, and yet Scripture does not relate this; so it may be reasonably argued that she was sanctified in the womb. For it is reasonable to believe that she, who brought forth *the Only Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth*, received greater privileges of grace than all others: hence we read (*Luke* 1:28) that the angel addressed her in the words: *Hail full of grace!*

Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus* §1-3, 42-45

§2. *Now, just like the present age, our pontificate is weighed down by ever so many cares, anxieties, and troubles, by reason of very severe calamities that have taken place and by reason of the fact that many have strayed away from truth and virtue.* Nevertheless, we are greatly consoled to see that, while the Catholic faith is being professed publicly and vigorously, piety toward the Virgin Mother of God is flourishing and daily growing more fervent, and that almost everywhere on earth it is showing indications of a better and holier life. *Thus, while the Blessed Virgin is fulfilling in the most affectionate manner her maternal duties on behalf of those redeemed by the blood of Christ, the minds and the hearts of her children are being vigorously aroused to a more assiduous consideration of her prerogatives.*

§3. Actually God, who from all eternity regards Mary with a most favorable and unique affection, has “when the fullness of time came” put the plan of his providence into effect in such a way that all the privileges and prerogatives he had granted to her in his sovereign generosity were to shine forth in her in a kind of perfect harmony. *And, although the Church has always recognized this supreme generosity and the perfect harmony of graces and has daily studied them more and more throughout the course of the centuries, still it is in our own age that the privilege of the bodily Assumption into heaven of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, has certainly shone forth more clearly ...*

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued]

§42. We, who have placed our pontificate under the special patronage of the most holy Virgin, to whom we have had recourse so often in times of grave trouble, we who have consecrated the entire human race to *her Immaculate Heart* in public ceremonies, and who have time and time again experienced her powerful protection, are confident that this solemn proclamation and *definition of the Assumption will contribute in no small way to the advantage of human society*, since it redounds to the glory of the Most Blessed Trinity, to which the Blessed Mother of God is bound by such singular bonds.

It is to be hoped that all the faithful will be stirred up to a stronger piety toward their heavenly Mother, and that the souls of all those who glory in the Christian name may be moved by the desire of sharing in the unity of Jesus Christ's Mystical Body and of increasing their love for her who shows her motherly heart to all the members of this august body. And so we may hope that those who meditate upon the glorious example Mary offers us may be more and more convinced of the value of a human life entirely devoted to carrying out the heavenly Father's will and to bringing good to others. Thus, while the illusory teachings of materialism and the corruption of morals that follows from these teachings threaten to extinguish the light of virtue and to ruin the lives of men by exciting discord among them, in this magnificent way all may see clearly to what a lofty goal our bodies and souls are destined. *Finally it is our hope that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective.*

§43. We rejoice greatly that this solemn event falls, according to the design of God's providence, during this Holy Year, so that we are able, while the great Jubilee is being observed, to adorn the brow of God's Virgin Mother with this brilliant gem, and to leave a monument more enduring than bronze of our own most fervent love for *the Mother of God*.

§44. For which reason, after we have poured forth prayers of supplication again and again to God, and have invoked the light of the Spirit of Truth, *for the glory of Almighty God who has lavished his special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma:*

that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

§45. Hence if anyone, which God forbid, should dare willfully to deny or to call into doubt that which we have defined, let him know that he has fallen away completely from the divine and Catholic Faith.

Theoteknos of Livias, *Homily on the Assumption* (c. 650 A.D.)

It was fitting ...that the most holy-body of Mary, God-bearing body, receptacle of God, divinized, incorruptible, illuminated by divine grace and full glory ...should be entrusted to the earth for a little while and raised up to heaven in glory, with her soul pleasing to God.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

John of Damascus, Dormition of Mary (749 A.D.)

It was fitting that the she, who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth, should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. It was fitting that she, who had carried the Creator as a child at her breast, should dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was fitting that the spouse, whom the Father had taken to himself, should live in the divine mansions. It was fitting that she, who had seen her Son upon the cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped when giving birth to him, should look upon him as he sits with the Father, *it was fitting that God's Mother should possess what belongs to her Son, and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the handmaid of God.*

Oecumenius,¹⁹ Commentary on the Apocalypse 12.1–2

(Mother of God a Citizen of Heaven)

The vision intends to describe more completely to us the circumstances concerning the antichrist... However, since the incarnation of the Lord, which made the world his possession and subjected it, provided a pretext for Satan to raise this one up and to choose him [as his instrument]—for the antichrist will be raised to cause the world again to fall from Christ and to persuade it to desert to Satan—and since moreover his fleshly conception and birth was the beginning of the incarnation of the Lord, the vision gives a certain order and sequence to the material that it is going to discuss and begins the discussion from the fleshly conception of the Lord by portraying for us the mother of God. What does he say? *“And a sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon was under her feet.”*

As we said, it is speaking about the mother of our Savior. The vision appropriately depicts her as in heaven and not on the earth, for she is pure in soul and body, equal to an angel and a citizen of heaven. She possesses God who rests in heaven—*“for heaven is my throne,”* it says—yet she is flesh, although she has nothing in common with the earth nor is there any evil in her. Rather, she is exalted, wholly worthy of heaven, even though she possesses our own human nature and substance.

For the Virgin is consubstantial with us ... And what does it mean that she was clothed with the sun and the moon was under her feet? The holy prophet, Habakkuk, prophesied concerning the Lord, saying, *“The sun was lifted up, and the moon stood still in its place for light”* (Hab. 3:11), calling Christ our Savior, or at least the proclamation of the gospel, the *“sun of righteousness”* (Mal. 4:2). When he was exalted and increased, the moon—that is, the law of Moses—*“stood still”* and no longer received any addition.

For after the appearance of Christ, it no longer received proselytes from the nations as before but endured diminution and cessation. You will, therefore, observe this with me, that also the holy Virgin is covered by the spiritual sun. **For this is what the prophet calls the Lord when concerning Israel he says, “Fire fell upon them, and they did not see the sun” (Psa 57:9).** But the moon, that is, the worship and citizenship

¹⁹ Oecumenius: Ninth century Bishop of Trikka (Turkey). Called The Rhetor or The Philosopher. Oecumenius wrote the earliest extant Greek commentary on Revelation. Scholia by Oecumenius on Some of his ‘scholia’ on Chrysostom’s Pauline commentaries are still extant.

according to the law, being subdued and become much less than itself, is under her feet, for it has been conquered by the brightness of the gospel ...

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued]

And rightly does he call the things of the law by the word *moon*, for they have been given light by the sun, that is, Christ, just as the physical moon is given its light by the physical sun. The point would have been better made had it said not that the woman was clothed with the sun but that the woman enclothed the sun, which was enclosed in her womb. However, that the vision might show that the Lord, who was being carried in the womb, was the shelter of his own mother and the whole creation, it says that he was enclothing the woman. Indeed, the holy angel said something similar to the holy Virgin: “*The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*” (Lk. 1:35). For to overshadow is to protect, and to enclothe is the same according to power.

Blessed John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* 30 (*The Woman Clothed with the Sun*)

§ 30. From the “beginning,” woman - like man - was created and placed by God in this order of love. The sin of the first parents did not destroy this order, nor irreversibly cancel it out. This is proved by the words of the Proto-evangelium (cf. *Gen* 3:15). Our reflections have focused on *the particular place occupied by the “woman”* in this key text of revelation. It is also to be noted how the same Woman, who attains the position of a biblical “exemplar”, also appears within the eschatological perspective of the world and of humanity given in the Book of Revelation. She is “a woman clothed with the sun,” with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of stars (cf. *Rev* 12:1). One can say she is a Woman of cosmic scale, on a scale with the whole work of creation. At the same time she is “suffering the pangs and anguish of childbirth” (*Rev* 12:2) like Eve “the mother of all the living” (*Gen* 3:20). She also suffers because “before the woman who is about to give birth” (cf. *Rev* 12:4) there stands “the great dragon ... that ancient serpent” (*Rev* 12:9), already known from the Proto-evangelium: the Evil One, the “father of lies” and of sin (cf. *Jn* 8:44). The “ancient serpent” wishes to devour “the child.” While we see in this text an echo of the Infancy Narrative (cf. *Mt* 2:13,16), we can also see that the struggle with evil and the Evil One marks the biblical exemplar of the “woman” from the beginning to the end of history. It is also *a struggle for man, for his true good, for his salvation*. Is not the Bible trying to tell us that it is precisely in the “woman” - Eve—Mary - that history witnesses a dramatic struggle for every human being, the struggle for his or her fundamental “yes” or “no” to God and God's eternal plan for humanity?

[PRAYER]

St. John of Damascus, *Homily 1 on the Dormition*, 14

We today also remain near you, O Lady. Yes, I repeat, O Lady, Mother of God and Virgin. We bind our souls to your hope, as to a most firm and totally unbreakable anchor, consecrating to you mind, soul, body, and all our being and honoring you, as much as we can, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles. Amen.

5. The Crowning of Mary

(Luke 1:43 / cf. I Kings 1:16, 31; 2:17, 20)

OPENING REFLECTION: POPE LEO XIII

The more you have at heart the honor of Mary, and the welfare of human society, the more diligently apply yourselves to nourish the piety of the people towards the great Virgin, and to increase their confidence in her. We believe it to be part of the designs of Providence that, in these times of trial for the Church, the ancient devotion to the august Virgin should live and flourish amid the greatest part of the Christian world. May now the Christian nations, excited by Our exhortations, and inflamed by your appeals, seek the protection of Mary with an ardour growing greater day by day; let them cling more and more to the practice of the Rosary, to that devotion which our ancestors were in the habit of practicing, not only as an ever-ready remedy for their misfortunes, but as a whole badge of Christian piety. The heavenly Patroness of the human race will receive with joy these prayers and supplications, and will easily obtain that the good shall grow in virtue, and that the erring should return to salvation and repent; and that God who is the avenger of crime, moved to mercy and pity may deliver Christendom and civil society from all dangers, and restore to them peace so much desired.

- Pope Leo XIII, *Upremi Apostolatus Officio* (“On Devotion of the Rosary”) 1883

(LUKE 1:43)

And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

(I KINGS 1:15-18, 31-35)

¹⁵ So Bathsheba went to the king into his chamber (now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was ministering to the king). ¹⁶ *Bathsheba bowed and did obeisance to the king, and the king said, “What do you desire?”* ¹⁷ She said to him, “My lord, you swore to your maidservant by the LORD your God, saying, ‘Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.’ ¹⁸ *And now, behold, Adonijah is king, although you, my lord the king, do not know it.*

³¹ Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and did obeisance to the king, and said, “*May my lord King David live forever!*” ³² King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king. ³³ And the king said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon; ³⁴ and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet there anoint him king over Israel; then blow the trumpet, and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ ³⁵ You shall then come up after him, and he shall come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.”

(I KINGS 2:17, 20)

¹⁷ And he said, “Pray ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.” ¹⁸ Bathsheba said, “*Very well; I will speak for you to the king.*” ²⁰ Then she said, “I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me.” And the king said to her, “*Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you.*”

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

Mother in the Order of Grace

CCC 967 By her complete adherence to the Father’s will, to his Son’s redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church’s model of faith and charity. Thus she is a “preeminent and ... wholly unique member of the Church”; indeed, she is the “exemplary realization” (*typus*) of the Church.

CCC 968 Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. *“In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior’s work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.”*

CCC 969 “This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of *Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.*”

CCC 970 *“Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.* But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men ... flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it” (LG 60). “No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, *so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source*” (LG 62).

Pope Pius XII, *Ad Caeli Reginam*

(Encyclical Proclaiming the Queenship of Mary, 1950)

§8. From early times Christians have believed, and not without reason, that she of whom was born the Son of the Most High received privileges of grace above all other beings created by God. He “*will reign in the house of Jacob forever,*” “*the Prince of Peace,*” the “*King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*” And when Christians reflected upon the intimate connection that obtains between a mother and a son, they readily acknowledged the supreme royal dignity of the Mother of God.

§ 9. Hence it is not surprising that the early writers of the Church called Mary “*the Mother of the King*” and “*the Mother of the Lord,*” basing their stand on the words of St. Gabriel the archangel, who foretold that the Son of Mary would reign forever, and on the words of Elizabeth who greeted her with reverence and called her “*the Mother of my Lord.*” *Thereby they clearly signified that she derived a certain eminence and exalted station from the royal dignity of her Son ...*

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued]

§ 38. From these considerations, the proof develops on these lines: if Mary, in taking an active part in the work of salvation, was, by God's design, associated with Jesus Christ, the source of salvation itself, in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of "recapitulation," in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race, just as a virgin had been closely associated with its death; if, moreover, it can likewise be stated that this glorious Lady had been chosen Mother of Christ "in order that she might become a partner in the redemption of the human race"; and if, in truth, "it was she who, free of the stain of actual and original sin, and ever most closely bound to her Son, on Golgotha offered that Son to the Eternal Father together with the complete sacrifice of her maternal rights and maternal love, like a new Eve, for all the sons of Adam, stained as they were by his lamentable fall," *then it may be legitimately concluded that as Christ, the new Adam, must be called a King not merely because He is Son of God, but also because He is our Redeemer, so, analogously, the Most Blessed Virgin is queen not only because she is Mother of God, but also because, as the new Eve, she was associated with the new Adam.*

Blessed John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* 40-41

(Queen of Heaven, Queen of the Universe)

§40. After the events of the Resurrection and Ascension Mary entered the Upper Room together with the Apostles to await Pentecost, and was present there as the Mother of the glorified Lord. She was not only the one who "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" and loyally persevered in her union with her Son "unto the Cross," but she was also the "handmaid of the Lord," left by her Son as Mother in the midst of the infant Church: "*Behold your mother.*" Thus there began to develop a special bond between this Mother and the Church. For the infant Church was the fruit of the Cross and Resurrection of her Son. Mary, who from the beginning had given herself without reserve to the person and work of her Son, could not but pour out upon the Church, from the very beginning, her maternal self-giving.

After her Son's departure, her motherhood remains in the Church as maternal mediation: interceding for all her children, the Mother cooperates in the saving work of her Son, the Redeemer of the world. In fact the Council teaches that the "*motherhood of Mary in the order of grace...will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.*" With the redeeming death of her Son, the maternal mediation of the handmaid of the Lord took on a universal dimension, for the work of redemption embraces the whole of humanity. Thus there is manifested in a singular way the efficacy of the one and universal mediation of Christ "*between God and men*" Mary's cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, *in the universality of the mediation of the Redeemer, the one Mediator.* This is clearly indicated by the Council in the words quoted above.

"For," the text goes on, "*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.*" With this character of intercession, first manifested at Cana in Galilee, Mary's mediation continues in the history of the Church and the world. We read that Mary "*by her maternal charity, cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy homeland*"

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...http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html - \$2X

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

[Continued]

In this way Mary's motherhood continues unceasingly in the Church as the mediation which intercedes, and the Church expresses her faith in this truth by invoking Mary "*under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix.*" http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html - \$2Y

§41. Through her mediation, subordinate to that of the Redeemer, Mary contributes in a special way to the union of the pilgrim Church on earth with the eschatological and heavenly reality of the Communion of Saints, since she has already been "assumed into heaven." The truth of the Assumption, defined by Pius XII, is reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, which thus expresses the Church's faith: "*Preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of the Universe, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords (cf. Rev. 19:16) and the conqueror of sin and death.*" http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html - \$30 In this teaching Pius XII was in continuity with Tradition, which has found many different expressions in the history of the Church, both in the East and in the West.

By the mystery of the Assumption into heaven there were definitively 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). In the mystery of the Assumption is expressed the faith of the Church, according to which Mary is "united by a close and indissoluble bond" to Christ, for, if as Virgin and Mother she was singularly united with him in his first coming, so through her continued collaboration with him she will also be united with him in expectation of the second; "*redeemed in an especially sublime manner by reason of the merits of her Son,*" she also has that specifically maternal role of *mediatrix of mercy at his final coming*, when all those who belong to Christ "*shall be made alive,*" when "*the last enemy to be destroyed is death*" (1 Cor.

15:26). http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html - \$32

Connected with this exaltation of the noble "*Daughter of Zion*" through her Assumption into heaven is the mystery of her eternal glory. For the Mother of Christ is glorified as "*Queen of the Universe.*" She who at the Annunciation called herself "*the handmaid of the Lord*" remained throughout her earthly life faithful to what this name expresses. In this she confirmed that she was a *true disciple of Christ*, who strongly emphasized that his mission was one of service: "*the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Matt. 20:28). In this way Mary became the first of those who, "*serving Christ also in others, with humility and patience lead their brothers and sisters to that King whom to serve is to reign,*" and she fully obtained that "*state of royal freedom*" proper to Christ's disciples: *to serve means to reign!*

St. Jerome, *De Universo* 4, 1

We should realize that 'Mary' means 'Lady' in the Syrian Language; and beautifully so, since she gave birth to the Lord of heaven and earth and all creation.

St. Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon 142, The Annunciation*

The Hebrew word *Mary* [Miriam] means *Domina.* The Angel therefore addresses her as 'Lady' to preclude all servile fear in the Lord's Mother, who was born and was called 'Lady' by the authority and command of her own Son.

TOPIC #8 – THE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES (CONTINUED)

St. Andrew of Crete, *Homilia II in Dormitionem Smae Deiparae*:

Today He transports from her earthly dwelling, as Queen of the human race, His ever-Virgin Mother, from whose womb He, the living God, took on human form . . . the perpetual Queen beside the King, her son," whose "snow-white brow is crowned with a golden diadem.

St. Ildephonsus of Toledo, *De virginitate perpetua*

O my Lady, my Sovereign, You who rule over me, Mother of my Lord . . . Lady among handmaids, Queen among sisters.

St. Bonaventure, *Sermon 4, On the Annunciation*

The Creator of all things rests in the tabernacle of the virginal womb, because here he has prepared his bridal chamber in order to become our brother; here he sets up a royal throne to become our prince; here he puts on priestly vestments to become our high priest. Because of this marital union, she is the Queen of heaven; because of the priestly vestments, she is the advocate of the human race.

Isaac of Stella,²⁰ *Sermon 52, On the Assumption*

Once, Queen Esther rose from her couch among the women in the palace of King Ahasuerus and rested in her beloved's embrace (cf. *Esther* 15). Today, this woman, the Queen of the world, is snatched away from the wicked world; she leaves the couch of the earthly Church; ascending above all the wives and widows, and with the virgins she is bathed and adorned. *Yet she outshines all the virgins. For "even though many daughters have piled up treasures," she "has surpassed them all" (Prov. 31:29).*

[PRAYER]

Daily Renewal of Total Consecration:

Immaculata, Queen and Mother of the Church, I renew my consecration to you for this day and for always, so that you might use me for the coming of the Kingdom of Jesus in the whole world. To this end I offer you all my prayers, actions and sacrifices for this day. Amen.

²⁰ Isaac joined the Order of Cistercians, during the reform of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. He followed in the line of Bernard's Marian theology. The best of his thought is found in his rich homilies, which are well-structured and convincing.