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English Translation of Chapter VIII of Lumen Gentium: The Blessed Virgin Mary, God-Bearer, in the Mystery of Christ and of the Church

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Appendix IV

CHAPTER VIII (*Lumen Gentium*)*

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, GOD-BEARER, IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND OF THE CHURCH

I. PREFACE

52. The all-merciful and all-wise God, willing the accomplishment of the world's redemption, "when the fullness of time came, sent his own Son born of a woman . . . in order that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4: 4-5). He is the one "who for the sake of us human beings and for our salvation came down from heaven and was made flesh by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary." (1) This divine mystery of salvation is revealed to us and continued in the Church, which the Lord has established as his own body, and in which the faithful, clinging to Christ the Head and in union with all his saints, should also venerate the memory "in the first place of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2)

53. In fact, the Virgin Mary, who by the message of the Angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and brought forth Life to the world, is acknowledged and honored as truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer. Redeemed in a

*Translation by F. M. Jelly, O.P. (Arts. 52-54), James T. O'Connor (Arts. 55-59), and Charles W. Neumann, S.M. (Arts. 60-69).

(1) Constantinopolitan *Creed* of the Roman Mass: Mansi 3, 566; cf. the COUNCIL OF EPHESUS, MANSI 4, 1130 (and MANSI 2, 665 and 4, 1071); the COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON, MANSI 7, 111-116; the SECOND COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE, MANSI 9, 375-396.

(2) *Canon* of the Roman Mass (Eucharistic Prayer I).

loftier way in view of the merits of her Son and joined to Him by an intimate and unbreakable bond, she is endowed with the supreme role and dignity of being the Mother of God's Son, and so the favorite daughter of the Father as well as the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. In this gift of exceptional grace she far surpasses all other creatures in heaven and upon earth. At the same time, however, she is found to be conjoined with all the other human beings in Adam's stock who are to be saved; even more, she is "clearly the mother of (Christ's) members, . . . because by her charity she cooperated in bringing about the birth of the faithful in the Church, who are the members of its Head." (3) Indeed for this reason she is hailed as the preeminent and entirely singular member of the Church as well as its type and outstanding exemplar in faith and in charity. Instructed by the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church with the affection of filial piety honors her as most loving mother.

54. Wherefore this most sacred Synod, while setting forth the doctrine about the Church in which the divine Redeemer carries salvation into effect, intends to explain carefully both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Word Incarnate and of the Mystical Body, as well as the duties of the redeemed human race towards the God-Bearer, mother of Christ and mother of mankind, especially of the faithful. Nevertheless, it does not have in mind to present a complete doctrine about Mary or to settle questions which have not yet been fully clarified by the work of theologians. And so it is lawful to maintain those opinions which are freely proposed in Catholic schools about her, who holds a place in holy Church that is the highest after Christ and the closest to us. (4)

(3) ST. AUGUSTINE, *On Holy Virginit*y 6: PL 40, 399.

(4) Cf. PAUL VI, *Address to the Council* (Dec. 4, 1963): AAS 56 (1964) p. 37: And likewise for the schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary we hope for the solution most in keeping with the nature of this council, that is, the unanimous and loving acknowledgment of the place, privileged above all others, which the Mother of God occupies in the Holy Church—in the Church which is the principal subject matter of the present Council. After Christ her place in the Church is the most exalted, and also the one closest to us, so that we can honor her with the title "Mother of the Church" to her glory and to our benefit.

II. THE ROLE OF THE B. VIRGIN IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

55. The Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and the Tradition which is to be venerated show forth the role of the Mother of the Savior in the economy of salvation in an ever clearer light and propose it as something to be examined. Indeed, the books of the Old Testament describe the history of salvation, by which the advent of Christ into the world is gradually prepared. These primitive documents, as they are read in the Church and are understood under the light of further and full revelation, gradually bring into a clearer light the figure of a woman, the Mother of the Redeemer. Considered in this light, she is already prophetically foreshadowed in the promise concerning the victory over the serpent (cf. Gen 3:15), as this promise was given to the first parents who had fallen into sin. Likewise this is the Virgin who shall conceive and bear a Son whose name will be called Emmanuel (cf. Is 7:14; cf. Michea 5:2-3—Mt 1:22-23). She stands forth among the humble and poor of the Lord who, with trust, hope for and accept salvation from Him. Finally, with Her, the outstanding Daughter of Sion, after a long expectation of the promise, the times are fulfilled and the new Economy is established, when the Son of God assumed human nature from her so that, by the mysteries of his flesh, he might free man from sin.

56. Moreover, the Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined mother should precede the incarnation, so that, just as a woman contributed to death so also one would contribute to life. This is most especially true of the Mother of Jesus who poured forth on the world the Life itself which renews all things, and who was enriched by God for so great a task by suitable gifts. Hence it is not to be wondered at that, among the holy Fathers, the usage prevailed according to which they called the Mother of God completely holy and immune from all stain of sin, as though fashioned and formed by the Holy Spirit into a new creature. (5) Enriched by the splendors of a totally singular

(5) Cf. ST. GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *Homily on the Annunciation of the Mother of God*: PG 98, 328A: You who are completely clean and lacking

sanctity from the first instant of her conception, the Virgin of Nazareth is, by the command of God, saluted by the Angel of the annunciation as "full of grace" (cf. Lk 1:28), and she herself responds to the heavenly messenger, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). Thus Mary, the daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine word, became the mother of Jesus, embracing the saving will of God with a full heart and hindered by no sin so that she dedicated herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, serving under him and with him, by the grace of almighty God, the mystery of redemption. Rightly therefore do the holy Fathers consider Mary not as being used by God merely passively but as cooperating in human salvation with a

in all blame (*amemptos*). . . . *Second Homily on the Dormition*: PG 98, 357: Let death perish for you, O Mother of God, because you have brought life to mortals. Let the tomb perish for you inasmuch as you have been made the divine foundation stone of inexpressible sublimity. Let dust perish, for indeed you are a new creation (*anaplasia*), for you have been made Lady Ruler (*despoina*) over those corrupted in the slime of the earth. . . . O most unspotted one (*panachrante*).

ST. ANASTASIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Second Sermon on the Annunciation*, 2: PG 89, 1377AB: . . . Most unspotted (*panachrantou*) Mary, Mother of God. *Third Sermon on the Annunciation*, 2: PG 89, 1388C: From you (Mary) may the feminine sex hear the words, "Hail, women who have received the beginning of joy, namely the only highly-favored one (*kecharitomene*) among virgins, the beautiful, the immaculate (*aspilon*), the holy Mary, Mother of God."

ST. ANDREW OF CRETE, *Canon (hymn) on the Nativity of Blessed Mary*, 4: PG 97, 1321B: O Lord, You have opened the womb of Sarah, offering Isaac as the fruit of old age; today, however, You the very Savior, rich fruit of the womb, have given Your immaculate (*aspilon*) Mother to pious Anna. Let Anna say: "Lord, You have heard my prayers, giving me today the fruit of the promise, the holy one . . . foreordained to be your spotless (*achranton*) Mother." . . . Spotless is your birth, O spotless virgin.

First Sermon on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin: PG 97, 812A: Today the pure nobility of mankind receives the grace of the first creation by God and thus returns to itself; and the nature clinging to the newly born Mother of the Beautiful One receives back the glorious beauty which had been dimmed by evil's degradation, as well as a formation invested with the splendor of God . . . , a re-formation . . . , a deification. . . . Today nature begins to be reformed, and the aged world, receiving an altogether godlike reformation, takes up the beginning of a second creation by God. *First Homily on the Dor-*

free faith and obedience. For she is, as St. Irenaeus says, "obedient and is made the cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race." (6) Therefore not a few of the ancient Fathers in their preaching willingly assert with him: "The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened by the obedience of Mary; what the virgin Eve bound by her unbelief the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith"; (7) and, having made the comparison with Eve, they call Mary the "mother of the living," (8) and frequently affirm: "Death through Eve, life through Mary." (9)

mission: PG 97, 1068C: (Mary was) deified in Christ, the image completely resembling the beauty of the original.

ST. SOPHRONIUS OF JERUSALEM, *Second Sermon on the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God*: PG 87 (3), 3237BD (of which an excerpt is given here): In a word, you far outdistanced every creature, for you outshone every creature in purity and received within yourself the Creator of all creatures, you bore Him in your womb, and you brought Him forth, you alone of all creatures the Mother of God.

(6) ST. IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses* III, 22, 4: PG 7, 959A; HARVEY 2, 123 (Text is cited in Article 56).

(7) ST. IRENAEUS, *ibidem*; HARVEY 2, 124 (Text is cited in Article 56).

(8) ST. EPIPHANIUS, *On Heresies* 78, 18: PG 42, 728CD–729AB (The full text, source of the expression cited in Article 56, is too lengthy to cite; an excerpt follows.): By Mary the Virgin life itself was begotten in the world, so that Mary might give birth to the Living One and become mother of the living. . . . Eve was for men an occasion of death, and it was through her that death entered the world; Mary was an occasion of life, and it was through her that life has been begotten for us.

(9) ST. JEROME, *Epistle* 22, 21: PL 22, 408 (The context of the sentence cited in Article 56 follows.): Later the Virgin conceived and bore for us a Son, "upon whose shoulders dominion rests" (Is 9:6), God, the Strong One, the Father of the age to come, and the curse is loosened. Death through Eve; life through Mary. And therefore more richly does the gift of virginity flow upon women, because it began with a woman.

Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermon* 51, 2, 3; PL 38, 335: Let each sex behold its own honor, and each confess its iniquity, and each hope for salvation. When man was deceived the poison was poured out through a woman; when man is restored salvation is poured out through a woman. By bearing Christ the woman compensates for the sin of the man who was deceived by her. *Sermon* 232, 2: PL 38, 1108: Through the feminine sex man fell, through the feminine sex man was repaired; because the virgin bore Christ, and a woman announced he had arisen. Through a woman death, through a woman life.

ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *Catechesis* 12, 15: PG 33, 741AB: Through the vir-

57. Moreover, this union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is manifested from the time of the virginal conception of Christ until His death; in the first place, indeed, when Mary, arising with haste to visit Elizabeth, is greeted by her as blessed because of her faith in the promise of salvation, and the precursor leapt for joy in the womb of his mother (cf. Lk 1:41-45); at the nativity indeed when the Mother of God joyfully showed to the shepherds and Magi her firstborn Son, who did not diminish but sanctified her virginal integrity. (10) When indeed she presented Him to the Lord in the Temple, having made the offering of the poor, she heard Simeon simultaneously foretell that her Son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword would pierce the soul of the mother so that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed (cf. Lk 2:34-35). His parents found the boy Jesus, when he had been lost and they

gin Eve death entered; it was necessary that through the Virgin, or rather of the Virgin, life should enter.

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *On Psalm 44*, 7: PG 55, 193: A virgin drove us from paradise; through (*dia*) a Virgin we have found eternal life.

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *Second Homily on the Dormition*, 3: PG 96, 728: Eve . . . brought about a sentence of grief and sorrow. . . . (Mary) conceived the person of God's Word, in whom everything is fulfilled.

(10) Cf. COUNCIL OF LATERAN (649), *Canon 3*: MANSI 10, 1151: If anyone should not confess that the holy ever Virgin, immaculate Mary, Mother of God conceived God the Word Himself by the Holy Spirit, without seed . . . and that she gave birth to Him incorruptibly, her virginity remaining permanently unbroken even after childbirth . . . let him be anathema.

ST. LEO THE GREAT, *Tome to Flavian*: PL 54, 759: She brought Him forth, her virginity being preserved, just as she conceived Him, her virginity being preserved.

COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON: MANSI 7, 462: . . . The Virgin is called Theotokos, on account of Him who deigned to consecrate her virginity even after childbirth and, as befits God, to seal her womb in its intact condition.

ST. AMBROSE, *On the Instruction of a Virgin*: PL 16, 320: "This door will be closed and it will not be opened." The good door is Mary, who was closed and was not opened. Christ passed through her but did not open her. . . . There is a door of the womb, although it is not always closed; indeed only one was able to remain closed, she through whom the virgin's offspring came forth without loss of genital intactness (*sine dispendio claustrorum genitalium virginis partus exiuit*). . . . "This door will be closed," . . . that is, closed before and after the passage of the Lord. . . .

had sought him with sorrow, in the Temple, occupied with the affairs of his Father; they did not understand the words of their Son. His Mother, however, preserved all these things to be meditated upon in her heart (cf. Lk 41-51).

58. In the public life of Jesus, his Mother appears significantly, at the beginning indeed when, at the wedding at Cana in Galilee, moved by mercy, she brought about by her intercession the first of the signs of Jesus the Messiah (cf. Jn 2:1-11). In the course of his preaching she received the words by which her Son, extolling a Kingdom beyond the reasons and bonds of flesh and blood, proclaimed blessed those hearing and keeping the word of God (cf. Mk 3:35, par Lk 11:27-28) as she herself was faithfully doing (cf. Lk 2:19-51). Thus, the B. Virgin also advanced in the pilgrimage of faith and faithfully sustained her union with her Son unto the Cross where she stood, not without the divine intention (cf. Jn 19:25), suffered grievously with her Only-begotten and associated herself with his sacrifice by her motherly spirit, lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim born of her: and, finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as mother to the disciple with these words, "Woman, behold your son" (cf. Jn 19:26-27). (11)

(11) Cf. PIUS XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (June 29, 1943): AAS 35 (1943) pp. 247f.: [Mary] consented "in the name of the whole human nature" that "a certain spiritual marriage should take place between the Son of God and human nature" (Thomas Aquinas, *ST* III, 30, 1). It was she who by a miraculous birth brought forth, as the source of all heavenly life Christ the Lord who, already in her virginal womb, was adorned with the dignity of being Head of the Church. It was she who presented Him, recently born, as Prophet, King, and Priest to those who were the first to come to adore Him from among the Jews and Gentiles. Later her Only Begotten, granting her maternal prayers at Cana of Galilee, worked the wonderful sign by which "his disciples believed in Him" (Jn 2:11). It was she, free of all hereditary or personal sin, who, always most intimately joined with her Son, offered Him on Calvary to the Eternal Father, together with the holocaust of her maternal rights and maternal love, as a new Eve, pitying all the sons of Adam who had been stained by his fall, so that she who was bodily the mother of our Head would become in spirit by a new title of sorrow and glory the mother of all His members. It was she who by her most powerful prayers begged that the Spirit of the Divine Redeemer, already given on the Cross, should be conferred with a prodigality of gifts on the recently born Church on the day of Pentecost. She is the one, finally, who,

59. Since indeed it pleased God not to manifest the mystery of human salvation solemnly before He would pour out the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the Apostles before the day of Pentecost "persevering unanimously in prayer with the women, and with Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers" (Acts 1:14), and Mary, by her prayers, imploring the gift of the Spirit Who had already overshadowed her at the Annunciation. Finally, the Immaculate Virgin, preserved immune from all stain of original sin (12), having completed the course of earthly life, was assumed to heavenly glory in body and soul (13), and was exalted

bearing immense sorrows with a strong and faithful heart, more than all the other faithful, as Queen of martyrs, "filled up those things which were lacking in the suffering of Christ for His Body which is the Church (Col 1:24), and upon the Mystical Body of Christ, born from the opened Heart of our Savior she bestows the same maternal care and great love with which she cherished and nourished the nursing Child Jesus.

(12) Cf. PIUS IX, Bull *Ineffabilis* (Dec. 8, 1854): Acta Pii IX, t. I, p. 616; DENZ 1641 (2803): The most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception by a unique grace and privilege of the omnipotent God and in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.

(13) Cf. PIUS XII, Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus* (Nov. 1, 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 743; DENZ. 2333 (3903): The immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, after her life on earth was assumed, body and soul, to the glory of heaven.

Cf. ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *Encomium on the Dormition of the Mother of God, Second and Third Homilies*: PG 96; 721-761, especially 728B (which is from the *Second Homily* and is given here): It was fitting that 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 in the act of 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.

ST. GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *On the Dormition of the Holy Mother of God, First Sermon*: PG 98 (6), 340-348 (of which an excerpt is given here): You are the one who, as it is written, appears in beauty, and your virginal body is all holy, all chaste, entirely the dwelling place of God, so that it is

by the Lord as Queen of the universe, so that she might be more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords (cf. Apoc 19:16) and victor over sin and death. (14)

henceforth completely exempt from dissolution into dust. Though still human, it is changed into the heavenly life of incorruptibility, truly living and glorious, undamaged and sharing in perfect life. . . . *Third Sermon*: PG 98 (6), 361: Where, therefore, I am you must be, Mother inseparable from your Son never taken from you.

ST. MODESTUS OF JERUSALEM, *On the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God*: PG 86 (2), 3277-3312 (of which an excerpt is given here): As the most glorious Mother of Christ, our Savior and God and the giver of life and immortality, was endowed with life by Him, she has received an eternal incorruptibility of the body together with Him who has raised her up from the tomb and has taken her to Himself in a way known only to Him.

(14) Cf. PIUS XII, Encyclical *Ad coeli Reginam* (Oct. 11, 1954): AAS 46 (1954) pp. 633-636; DENZ. 3913ff. (of which excerpts are given here): Both from the ancient testimonies handed on by the Fathers and from the Sacred Liturgy it is clear that the chief principle on which the royal dignity of Mary rests is without doubt her divine maternity. . . . Nevertheless the most Blessed Virgin Mary is said to be Queen not only because of her divine maternity, but also because, by the will of God, she had an outstanding share in the work of our eternal salvation. . . . Indeed in accomplishing the work of salvation the most Blessed Virgin Mary was most intimately associated with Christ. . . . For "just as Christ, because He redeemed us, is our Lord and our King by a special title, so is the Blessed Virgin [our Lady and Queen] because of the singular manner in which she cooperated in our redemption, by giving of her substance, by willingly offering Him for us, and by singularly desiring, praying for, and bringing about our salvation" (Suarez, *On the Mysteries of the Life of Christ*). . . . Furthermore, the Blessed Virgin not only has obtained, after Christ, the supreme degree of excellence and perfection, but also a certain participation in that power (*efficacitatis*) by which her Son and our Redeemer is said, justly and properly, to rule over the minds and wills of men. . . .

Cf. ST. ANDREW OF CRETE, *Third Homily on the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God*: PG 97, 1089-1109 (excerpted here): . . . The Queen of the entire human race, faithful in reality to the meaning of her name, who is exalted above all things save only God Himself.

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *On the Orthodox Faith* IV, 14: PG 94, 1153-1161 (excerpted here): Why therefore will she not be Mother of God, she who begot God made flesh from herself? Indeed truly and properly is she Mother of God and Lady Ruler (*Kuria*) and she commands all creatures, she who was at once mother and handmaid of the Creator.

III. THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THE CHURCH

60. One only is our Mediator according to the words of the Apostle: "God is one, one also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for us all" (1 Tim 2: 5-6). Yet Mary's maternal role toward men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. For every salutary influence of the Blessed Virgin on men originates not in any inner necessity but from the divine pleasure; it flows forth from the superabundance of Christ's merits, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power therefrom; in no way does it hinder the direct union of believers with Christ, but rather fosters it.

61. Eternally predestined as Mother of God in union with the incarnation of the divine Word, the Blessed Virgin, by decree of divine Providence, was on earth the loving Mother of the divine Redeemer, his generous associate above all others in a singular way, and the humble handmaid of the Lord. Conceiving Christ, bringing him forth, nourishing him, presenting him to the Father in the temple, suffering along with her Son as he died on the cross, she cooperated in an utterly singular way by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is mother to us in the order of grace.

62. Beginning with the consent which in faith she gave at the Annunciation and which without wavering she sustained beneath the cross, this motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. For taken to heaven she has not laid aside this saving role, but by her manifold intercession continues to obtain for us gifts of eternal salvation. (15) In her maternal charity she cares for the

(15) Cf. JOSEPH KLEUTGEN, revised text of *On the Mystery of the Incarnate Word*, ch. 4: MANSI 53, 290: Thus, bearing Christ, our Lord and God, she became mother of grace for us . . . nor does she cease to secure for us eternal gifts of salvation by her powerful intercession.

Cf. ST. ANDREW OF CRETE, *On the Birth of Mary*, Sermon 4: PG 97, 865A: Hail mediatrix (*mesitis*) of law and grace.

ST. GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE, *On the Annunciation of the Godbearer*: PG 98, 321BC: Truly good mediatrix (*mesiteia*) of all sinners. *On the Dor-*

brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties until they are led into their happy fatherland. Therefore the B. Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix. (16) This, however, is so understood as neither to take anything

mission of the Godbearer, 3: PG 98, 361D: I have set you up as a dike for the world, a bridge for those tossed about on the waves, a walking-staff for those who are led by hand, an advocate (*presbeia*) for sinners, finally, a staircase which suffices for leading mortals onward into heaven.

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE, *On the Dormition of the B.V. Mary*, Homily 1, 8: PG 96, 712 BC-713A (Excerpt here): Of old the ark prefigured you, in which the seed of a second world was preserved. For you bore Christ, salvation of the world, who indeed drowned sin and calmed its waves. . . . So you also, fulfilling the role of mediatrix (*mesiteusasa*) and become a stairway for God who descends to us so that He might assume our weak nature and join and unite it to himself. . . . you gathered together what had been shattered.

(16) Cf. LEO XIII, Encyclical *Adiutricem populi* (Sept. 5, 1895): ASS 15 (1895-96) p. 303: Among her many other titles we find her hailed as Our Lady, our mediatrix, the reparatrix of the whole world, the dispenser (*conciliatrix*) of God's gifts.

ST. PIUS X, Encyclical *Ad diem illum* (Feb. 2, 1904): *Acta* I, p. 154; DENZ. 1978a (3370): From this community of will and suffering between Christ and Mary "she merited to become most worthily the reparatrix of the lost world" (Eadmer, *De Excellentia Virginis Mariae*, c. 9) and dispensatrix of all the gifts that our Savior purchased for us by His death and by His blood. . . . By this union in sorrow and suffering, as we have said, which existed between the Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin "to be the most powerful Mediatrix and Consolatrix of the whole world with her divine Son" (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*).

PIUS XI, Encyclical *Miserentissimus* (May 8, 1928): AAS 20 (1928) p. 178: May the most gracious Mother of God, who gave us Jesus as Redeemer, who reared Him, and at the foot of the Cross offered Him as Victim, who by her mysterious union with Christ and by her matchless grace rightly merits the name reparatrix, deign to smile upon Our wishes and Our undertakings. Trusting in her intercession with Christ the Lord, who though "sole mediator between God and man" wished however to make His Mother the advocate for sinners and the dispenser (*ministra*) and mediatrix of His grace. . . .

PIUS XII, *Radio Message* (in Portuguese; May 13, 1946): AAS 38 (1946) p. 266: Associated as Mother and minister to the King of martyrs in the ineffable work of man's redemption, she is likewise associated with Him forever, with power, so to speak, infinite, in the distribution of the graces flowing from the Redemption.

Jesus is by nature and by consent the King of the eternal ages; through Him

away from nor add anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. (17)

For no creature could ever be ranked along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by the ministers and by the faithful people, and just as the one goodness of God is in reality spread abroad in different ways among his creatures, so also the Redeemer's unique mediation does not exclude but rather stirs up among creatures a varied cooperation that participates in this unique source.

The Church does not hesitate to profess Mary's subordinate role of this kind, continually experiences it, and commends it to the hearts of the faithful so that, encouraged by this maternal protection, they may the more intimately cling to their Mediator and Savior.

63. By the gift and role of the divine motherhood which unites her to her Son the Redeemer, and by her singular graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately joined to the Church. As already St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is type of the Church (18), that is to say, in the order of faith, charity, and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, herself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out, presenting in a preeminent and singular way

with Him, subordinated to Him, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine association, by conquest, by singular election. Her kingdom is as vast as that of her divine Son because nothing of His dominion is excluded.

For this reason the Church salutes her as Sovereign and as Queen of the angels and the saints, of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles and martyrs, of confessors and virgins; for this reason the Church acclaims her Queen of heaven and earth, the glorious and most worthy Queen of the universe—*Regina caelorum, gloriosa Regina mundi, Regina mundi dignissima*; and she exhorts us to invoke her day and night, the mourning and weeping of this our exile: "Hail holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.

(17) ST. AMBROSE, *Letter 63*: PL 16, 1218: Jesus had no need of helper for the redemption of all, He who saved all without a helper.

(18) ST. AMBROSE, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke II*, 7: PL 15, 1555: Indeed espoused, yet virgin because she is type of the Church, which is immaculate yet married. She conceives us by the Spirit and gives birth to us as virgin without pang. And thus perhaps holy Mary, married to one person and pregnant by another. . . .

the model of both the virgin and the mother. (19) For it is in believing and obeying that she brought forth on earth the Father's very Son, indeed not knowing man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, as the New Eve giving, not to the serpent of old but to God's messenger, a faith unsullied by any doubt. She brought forth the Son whom God established firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29), that is to say, the faithful, in whose generation and education she cooperates with maternal love.

(19) Cf. Ps.-PETER DAMIAN (= NICHOLAS OF CLAIRVAUX), *Sermon 63*: PL 144, 861AB: Each is certainly mother; Mary is mother, the Church is mother. But Mary is mother of Christ, the Church is mother of the Christian people. From Mary Christ took flesh, but as to the Church, Christ drew her from the flesh of His own side. From the former He came forth born according to the flesh; already dead, He brought forth the latter from his flesh. From the former He willed to be born; for the latter He deigned to die. From the one He was born a single time in His person; from the other His members are born. From the one He drew what would die for the other, so that from it the two together might be saved. Great and blessed Virgin Mary from whose bosom was taken the flesh of Christ, from which the Church in turn flowed out through water and blood. In this way from Mary the Church seems to have come forth.

GEOFFREY OF ST. VICTOR, *On the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin*, Ms. Paris, Mazarine, 1002, fol. 109r: Rightfully therefore even in time the Blessed Virgin is called the first mother of grace and the head of the Church. For although before her many holy and elect souls belonged to the Church that was to come some day, none of them so began and founded its present realization as the very one (sc., Mary) who was its first member and head.

There is no obstacle from the fact that according to the teaching of Holy Scripture we learn that the blessed fruit of her womb, the Lord Jesus, is head of the Church. For she is said to be this in one way, He in another; she in time, He by authority; she primitively, He principally; she materially as its first part and matter, He causatively as its efficient cause. Nor on this account should anyone imagine the Church to be as it were two-headed or a two-headed monster, because neither on this account is anyone said to be a quadruped or to have four feet on the grounds of having feet for the body in one sense and feet for the mind in another.

Therefore today all of mother Church exults and rejoices, because she celebrates not only the temporal origin of the one virgin mother, but in the one virgin mother she recalls her own birthday. For although the Virgin Mary alone is born today, in this one nonetheless and with this one is born, as is said, the universal Church.

Nor is there any obstacle from the fact that we read that Eve was formed from the side of the sleeping Adam, thus mystically giving to understand that (the Church) was formed from the side of Christ dying on the cross, and so not

64. The Church, in turn, contemplating her mysterious holiness, imitating her charity, and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will, herself becomes mother by faithfully receiving the word of God: for by preaching and baptism she brings forth to new and immortal life children conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God. She also is the virgin who keeps pure and intact the faith pledged to her Spouse, and imitating the Mother of her Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves a faith intact, a solid hope, a sincere charity. (20)

on this day (sc., Mary's birthday) but from the time of the Lord's passion the Church seems to have begun. This, I say, is no obstacle. For today she is begun by being born, and then she is begun by being born anew. Today through generation, and then through regeneration. Today she begins to be, and then she begins to be holy. So certainly there is a double birth of each of the faithful, the one fleshly, the other spiritual. One into life, the other into a holy life. Today therefore I do not say the Church is reborn, but rightly is the Church believed to be born, because (today) is born the first person of the Church.

GERHOH OF REICHERSBERG, *On the Glory and Honor of the Son of Man*, 10: PL 194, 1105AB: The Blessed Virgin Mary was the most select part of that ancient Synagogue, so loved by God the Father that He inflamed her above every other with His own love, made her pregnant also with His Word, which, spoken within her and first conceived in her mind, proceeded from her as a groom from His bridal chamber (Ps 18:6), about to love His new Church and in the latter each faithful person as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev 21:2). But among all His brides the Blessed Virgin was and remains adorned above everyone else, the consummation, as it were, of the Synagogue inasmuch as most select daughter of the patriarchs, and, after her Son, the new beginning of the Church inasmuch as mother of the apostles, to one of whom it was said (Jn 19:25), "Behold your mother."

(20) ST. AMBROSE (in addition to the citation in footnote 18), *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke X*, 24f.; PL 15, 1810BC: Do the will of the Father, so that you may be mother of Christ. . . . He who brings forth the word, brings forth Christ.

ST. AUGUSTINE, *Treatise on John 13*, 12: PL 35, 1499: Every Church (or, all the Church) is called virgin. . . . What is virginity of mind? Integral faith, solid hope, sincere charity. Cf. *Sermon 191*, 2, 3: PL 38, 1010: Imitating the Mother of her Lord (the Church) is both mother and virgin in mind, since she could not so be in body.

Cf. also VENERABLE BEDE, *Commentary on Luke I*, ch. 2: PL 92, 330: Until today and until the end of the world the Lord does not cease to be conceived in Nazareth and to be born in Bethlehem, since upon receiving the flower of

65. But while in the Most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached the perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27), the faithful of Christ are still striving to grow in holiness as they conquer sin; and therefore they raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth as model of virtue for the entire community of the elect. Devoutly meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word-made-man, the Church enters more deeply into the supreme mystery of the Incarnation and takes on more and more the likeness of her Spouse. For by having deeply entered into the history of salvation Mary somehow unites in herself and radiates the most important teachings of the faith; when she is being preached about and venerated, she summons believers to her Son and his sacrifice and to the love of the Father. Indeed as the Church pursues the glory of Christ she becomes more like her exalted Type, continually progressing in faith, hope, and charity, searching out and following the divine will in everything. Hence in her apostolic work too the Church rightly looks to her who brought forth

truth each one of His hearers makes himself the house of eternal bread. Daily in a virginal womb, that is, in the mind of believers, He is conceived by faith, He is born through Baptism. Daily the Church, Mother of God, following her teacher and ascending from the ways of worldly commerce, which Galilee represents, to the city of Juda, city of religion and praise, pays the tribute of her devotion to the eternal king. After the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the same time married and immaculate, she conceives us as a virgin by the Spirit, gives birth to us as a virgin without pang, and, as if indeed married to one yet made pregnant by another, through all her parts which make up the one Catholic (Church) she is joined visibly to the Pontiff set over her, yet has her increase from the invisible power of the Holy Spirit. (Note in the last sentence Bede's borrowing, even verbatim, from Ambrose, cited in footnote 18.)

ISAAC OF STELLA, *Sermon* 51: PL 194, 1863A: For the whole Christ, head and body, is one alone; He is one, of the one Father in heaven and of the one mother on earth; there are many sons and yet there is one Son.

For as the head and the members are both one Son and many sons, so Mary and the Church are one mother and yet many, one virgin and yet many. Each is mother, each is virgin; each conceives of the same Holy Spirit without lust; each without sin brings forth a child for God the Father. The former without sin bore the head for the body; in the forgiveness of all sins the latter brings forth a body for the head. Both are mother of Christ, but neither without the other bears the whole (Christ).

Christ, by design conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin, so that through the Church he might be born and grow in the hearts of the faithful also. During her lifetime the Virgin was a model of that maternal affection with which all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the rebirth of mankind.

IV. THE CULT OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE CHURCH

66. By God's grace Mary has been exalted above all angels and men to a place after her Son, as the most holy Mother of God who was involved in the mysteries of Christ, and thus she is rightly honored by the Church with a special cult. And indeed from earliest times the Blessed Virgin is venerated under the title "Godbearer," under whose protection the faithful prayerfully take refuge in all their perils and needs (21). Thus especially after the Council of Ephesus the cult of the People of God toward Mary grew remarkably in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation, according to her own prophetic words: "All generations shall call me blessed, because He who is mighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1:48). Although this cult, as it has always existed in the Church, is altogether special, it differs essentially from the cult of adoration, which is offered equally to the Incarnate Word and to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, and it contributes powerfully to this latter cult. For the various forms of devotion toward the Mother of God, which the Church has approved within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine, according to circumstances of time and place and to the dispositions and understanding of the faithful, bring it about that, while the Mother is being honored, the Son, through whom all things have their being (cf. Col 1:15-16) and in whom it has pleased the eternal Father "that all fulness should dwell" (Col 1:19), is rightly known, loved, and glorified, and his commandments observed.

(21) *Sub tuum praesidium* (We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and blessed Virgin).

67. The most holy Synod designedly teaches this Catholic doctrine, and at the same time it admonishes all the Church's sons and daughters generously to foster the cult, especially the liturgical cult, toward the Blessed Virgin, to treasure the practices and exercises of devotion toward her endorsed by the magisterium in the course of centuries, and to observe religiously what has been decreed in times past concerning the veneration of images of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the saints. (22)

(22) SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAËA (787): MANSI 13, 378-379; DENZ. 302 (600-601): . . . we define that, as with the priceless, life-giving cross, so with the venerable and holy images, they may be set up in their various forms in the churches, on the sacred vessels and vestments, on the walls; likewise in private houses, and along the roadside—namely, the image of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ as well as those of our untainted Lady the holy Mother of God and of the venerable angels and all the saints and patrons. The more often we look upon them, the more vividly are our minds turned to the memory and desire of those whom they represent, to kiss (these images) and give them “worshipful honor” but not that true adoration (*latria*) which, as our faith teaches, is to be given only to the divine nature; so that, like the holy cross, the gospels, and the relics of the saints, to these images offerings of incense and lights may be made, as was the pious custom of our ancestors. For the honor paid to the image passes to that which the image represents, and whoever “worships” an image “worships” the person it depicts.

COUNCIL OF TRENT, 25th session: MANSI 33, 171-172: The Council commands bishops and others who hold the office of teaching . . . to instruct the faithful . . . [that]

The images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints are to be placed and kept especially in the churches, and that due honor and veneration are to be paid to them; not, however, that any divinity or power is believed to be in them by reason of which they ought to be venerated, or that anything should be asked of them, or that trust ought to be placed in images, as formerly was done by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols (Ps. 134: 15f.). Rather, the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes they represent, so that by means of the images which we kiss and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ and venerate the saints whose likeness these images bear. That is what was defined by the decrees of the councils, especially of the Second Council of Nicaea, against the iconoclasts.

Moreover, let the bishops diligently teach that by means of the mysteries in the history of salvation portrayed in paintings and other representations, the people are instructed and confirmed in the articles of faith, which they ought constantly to bear in mind and reflect upon; also that great profit is derived from all the holy images, not only because the people are thereby reminded of

Moreover, it earnestly exhorts theologians and preachers of the word of God carefully to abstain alike from all false exaggeration as well as from excessive narrow-mindedness in considering the singular dignity of the Mother of God. (23) Pursuing the study of Sacred Scripture, the holy Fathers, the Doctors, and the Church's liturgies under the guidance of the magisterium, let them correctly explain the functions and privileges of the Blessed Virgin, which always relate to Christ, the source of all truth, holiness, and devotion. Let them carefully avoid whatever in word or deed could lead the separated brethren or anyone else into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church. Let the faithful remember, furthermore, that true devotion does not consist either in sterile or passing emotion or in a certain vain credulity, but rather proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to recognize the excellence of the Mother of God and are moved to filial love toward our Mother and to the imitation of her virtues.

the benefits and gifts bestowed on them by Christ, but also because through the saints God's miracles along with salutary models are set before the eyes of the faithful, that they may give God thanks, fashion their own life and conduct in imitation of the saints, and be moved to love and adore God and cultivate piety toward Him.

(23) Cf. PIUS XII, *Radio Message* to the International Mariological Congress (Oct. 24, 1954): AAS 46 (1954) p. 679: If these norms are strictly observed, Mariology will make genuine and permanent progress in inquiring ever more profoundly into the Blessed Virgin's gifts and dignity. And thus this study will go along the correct middle way, avoiding whatever falsely and intemperately goes beyond the bounds of truth, while keeping apart from those who are filled either with a kind of unreasonable fear of conceding more than they ought to the Blessed Virgin, or, as they frequently say, a fear that when the Mother is honored and invoked with filial reverence some honor and trust is withheld from the Divine Redeemer Himself. Encyclical *Ad coeli Reginam* (Oct. 11, 1954): AAS 46 (1954) p. 637: Theologians and preachers must take care, in all these questions relating to Our Lady, to avoid deviating from sound doctrine, lest they fall into a twofold error: they should avoid unfounded opinions expressed in words which go beyond the truth, and they should avoid too narrow an outlook in considering the singularly sublime and almost divine dignity which must be ascribed to the Mother of God, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, "from the infinite good, which is God" (ST, I, 25, 6, ad 4).

V. MARY, SIGN OF SURE HOPE AND COMFORT FOR GOD'S PILGRIMING PEOPLE

68. In the meantime, just as the Mother of Jesus, already glorified body and soul in heaven, is image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come, so does she shine forth to those on earth as sign of sure hope and comfort to God's pilgriming people, until the day of the Lord shall come (cf. 2 Pt 3:10).

69. It gives great joy and comfort to this most holy Synod that also among the separated brethren there are not wanting those who give due honor to the Mother of the Lord and Savior, especially among the Easterners, who with fervent impulse and devout mind concur in the cult of the ever-Virgin Godbearer. (24) Let all of Christ's faithful pour forth persevering supplications to the Mother of God and Mother of men, that she who assisted with her prayers at the beginnings of the Church may now also in heaven, exalted above the blessed and the angels, intercede in the presence of her Son in the Communion of all the Saints, until all the families of peoples, whether they are honored with the name Christian or whether they still do not know their Savior, are happily gathered into the one People of God in peace and harmony, for the glory of the Most Holy and undivided Trinity.

(24) Cf. PIUS XI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Dei* (Nov. 12, 1923): AAS 15 (1923) p. 581: Another link in the reestablishment of unity with the Eastern Slavic peoples lies in their singular love of the august Virgin Mother of God and devotion to her. By means of this devotion they distinguish themselves from a great number of heretics and are near to us.

PIUS XII, Encyclical *Fulgens corona* (Sept. 8, 1953): AAS 45 (1953) pp. 590-591: Furthermore, we call on those also who are separated from Us by ancient schism but whom nonetheless We love with paternal affection, to unite in pouring forth these joint prayers and supplications, knowing full well how greatly they venerate the Mother of Jesus Christ and celebrate her Immaculate Conception. May the same Blessed Virgin Mary look down on all those who are proud to call themselves Christians, and who, being united at least by the bond of charity, humbly raise to her their eyes, their minds, and their prayers, as they implore that light which illumines the mind with heavenly rays and beg for that unity by which at last there may be one fold and one shepherd (cf. Jn. 10:16).