

OUR LADY

Mediatrix of All Graces

By RAPHAEL V. O'CONNELL, S. J.

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Full of Grace

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PREFACE

The announcement of some new honor to be paid to the Blessed Mother of God, of some new jewel to be added to her already brilliant crown, sends a thrill of joy through the heart of every true child of Holy Church. For every genuine Catholic regards Mary as indeed his Mother—his spiritual Mother, to be sure, that is, in the order of grace,—but none the less, as, in a very true sense, holding towards him the place of a mother, and fulfilling in his regard the functions of the tenderest of mothers.

It is quite natural then for us to experience a sense of exhilaration at the prospect of seeing a new title added to the many, which, glorious as they are, do not, and cannot express to the full all that we conceive concerning Mary, and the part that she has had, and ever will have, in the all-important affair of our salvation.

For a score of years and more, the devout clients of our Blessed Lady in France, in Belgium, and elsewhere, have been most active

in their endeavors to bring home to the mass of the faithful the realization of all that Mary is to them. There has been no end to articles which have appeared in Catholic publications, setting forth from various points of view her spiritual motherhood, and numerous and brilliant Marian congresses have been held at Rome, at Fribourg, and notably at Folgoat, and in other towns of Brittany, in which the whole question of Mary's mediation in the matter of grace has been carefully and lovingly studied.

Recently, a very important step was taken by the Holy Father in the appointment of a special commission of theologians, with three branches, one to sit at Rome, another in Belgium, and a third in Spain, whose duty it should be to examine the question maturely and from every angle, and to give their verdict as to whether or not the *universal mediation* of Our Lady is capable of being defined as a dogma of faith.

The concession by the Holy See of the Mass and Office of Our Lady, Mediatrix of all Graces, to certain Bishops and communities who have asked for them, may at least be taken as a happy presage of what the final decision of the Church will be. While await-

ing it, the faithful who ardently desire to see so precious a jewel added to Mary's crown, may dispose themselves for that consoling event, and may even hasten its coming, by their earnest efforts to appreciate more and more fully the exact bearings of a doctrine, which they have all along undoubtedly believed, but of which they have not always perhaps caught the full import.

It will be the writer's aim in the following pages to set forth as clearly as may be the traditional view of the Catholic Church with regard to Mary's place in the plan of the Redemption, and to point out the implications, in such a way as to show that we are here face to face with no mere pious opinion, but with a truth that belongs to the deposit of divine revelation.

The chief source upon which he has drawn for the thoughts embodied in the present treatise is the excellent little work of Father J. V. Bainvel, S. J., Professor at the Catholic Institute of Paris, entitled, "Marie, Mere de Grace," to which is prefixed a noteworthy contribution on the subject by Father R. M. de la Broise, S. J., together with an Introduction by the eminent theologian, Cardinal Louis Billot, S. J.

Another source of which he has freely availed himself is Part II of Father J. B. Terrien, S.J.'s "La Mere de Dieu et des Hommes," a truly epoch-making work, to which Fr. Bainvel himself frequently refers.

Lastly, the writer has had much assistance from an able disquisition, entitled "La Madre di Dio, Universale Mediatrix di Grazia," which appeared in the *Civiltà Cattolica* for the 3rd and 17th May, 1924.

*St. Francis Xavier's College,
New York City*

*Feast of the Annunciation,
1926*

CHAPTER I

MARY A NEW AND BETTER EVE

There is perhaps nothing in all tradition that is more fully attested than Mary's claim to be regarded as a second and more blessed Eve. We have in favor of this consoling doctrine the concordant testimony of the Fathers of the Church, and in particular of those who approached nearest to the Apostolic times, and who, while they represent the most widely distant divisions of Christendom, speak but one language with regard to Mary's position in the economy of the Redemption.

Such are St. Justin Martyr, and St Irenaeus, who belong to the close of the second century of the Christian era, and Tertullian, who flourished in the first half of the third. In almost identical language, they contrast the incredulity and disobedience of Eve, still a virgin, with the faith and obedience of the ever Virgin Mary. The former, by hearkening to the voice of the serpent, brought death to the human race ; the latter, by receiving with

entire docility the word of God, conveyed to her by the Angel Gabriel, became a source of salvation to all mankind. Mary, by her obedience, shattered the chains, which had been forged by the disobedience of Eve. What Eve had bound by her incredulity, Mary loosed by her faith. Thus the human race, which had been doomed to death by a virgin, was saved by a Virgin, the obedience of the one serving as a counterpoise to the disobedience of the other.

The same antithesis between Eve and Mary is put forward even more plainly, if possible, by the most illustrious Fathers of the Church of subsequent ages, both in the east and in the west. "As death," says St. Cyril of Jerusalem, "had come through Eve, still a virgin, it was proper that life should come again through a Virgin, or rather of a Virgin; and because the serpent had deceived the one, it was but right that Gabriel should bear the good tidings to the other."

And St. Epiphanius says: "Eve became for mankind a cause of death, and it is through her that death came into the world; Mary was a principle of life, because through her life has come to us."

And still more strikingly St. John Chrys-

ostom: "A virgin, a bit of wood, and death symbolize our defeat. See now how these three things have become for us a principle of life. For Eve there is Mary; for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there is the wood of the Cross; for the death of Adam there is the death of Christ. Do you see the demon prostrated by the very weapons which had rendered him victorious?"

The Fathers just quoted represent the eastern Church: those of the west are also quite explicit. "Death through Eve, life through Mary," writes St. Jerome, and St. Augustine expresses the faith of the Latin Church in almost the same words, while St Bernard, in glowing language, draws out the contrast thus :

"One man and one woman," he says, "did us grievous harm, but, thank God, all has been wonderfully restored, and even with interest, by one Man and one Woman. For 'not as the offence, so also the gift': the greatness of the havoc done does not equal the immensity of the benefit. Eve was a cruel mediatrix, through whom the old serpent infected man himself with his pestilential venom; but how faithful was Mary, who prepared the antidote of salvation for one and the other sex! The

former was an instrument of seduction, the latter of reconciliation ; the one induced to sin, the other brought us our ransom.”

The identity of the language employed by the Fathers of the Church, of every age and of every clime, in pointing out the contrast between the part played by Eve as an instrument of death to the human race, and that of Mary as a source of Life, is clear proof that they are but witnesses of the faith of the universal Church. They are not propounding a doctrine which they have framed for themselves, but are handing on faithfully that which has come down to them from the earliest times.

If Eve received her name after having by her sin brought death into the world, it was only as prefiguring Mary that she merited to bear it. In reality she was *Mother of the dead*, not *Mother of the living*, as her name would imply. For they who were to trace their descent to her even to the end of time were all doomed to enter this world under sentence of death, the dupes and slaves of Satan. Eve had robbed them of life, ere imparting it to them.

But Mary, by her fidelity to her Maker, has deserved to give to mankind a Redeemer, who by His death has destroyed the reign of

death, and has thrown open to us the gates of life everlasting. Mary then is our Mother ; for it is to her, after Jesus, that we are indebted for the supernatural life of grace, and the hope of life eternal. But of this in a later chapter.

CHAPTER II

MARY AND THE FIRST GOOD TIDINGS

(Genesis iii: 14,15)

The fall of man was the effect, as we all know, of the malice and envy of the devil, who sought in this way to be revenged upon the Creator for having cast him out of heaven in punishment of the rebellion, into which his pride had plunged him along with the other wicked angels, the partners of his guilt. He could not directly attain the person of the Almighty, and hence he sought to seduce from his allegiance the head of a race, that was destined to fill the gaps left in the angelic ranks by the apostasy of the rebel spirits.

But the wisdom of God devised a means of repairing the damage caused by His astute and malignant foe, and not content with merely counteracting the evil done, He would at the same time utterly humble the demon's pride, and show how futile were his efforts to impede the realization of the divine pur-

pose. For this end, God took the scheme itself of the Evil One, and turned it back upon its inventor. The divine plan, as sketched for us in barest outline in the judgment passed upon Satan immediately after the fall, is clearly in the nature of a reprisal. Of this the opening words, "Because thou hast done this," leave not the slightest doubt. To defeat and humiliate His crafty foe, God will employ the very means which the latter made use of to mar His work. The wiles of Satan have succeeded in bringing ruin upon mankind, but at once God intervenes to save us from despair, and to raise us up to sentiments of invigorating hope. Not only does He promise our complete restoration, but to fill our hearts with courage for the unequal struggle, which confronts us, He is pleased to show us the most cunning contrivances of the demon turned into instruments of salvation, for those whose destruction they were meant to compass.

If a man has effected our ruin, a Man shall save us; if death reigns throughout the race of Adam, life shall come to us through a scion of that race; if a tree has been our undoing, a tree shall heal our wounds; if death is the punishment of sin, death shall take away our guilt.

But then the woman had played a conspicuous part in the victory won by Satan over the first man. The serpent had cunningly employed her as a mediatrix in the execution of his plan to win her husband to his will. A man and a woman had both taken part in the degradation of our race; they must both have part in its restoration. The two sexes had contributed each its share toward bringing damnation upon mankind; it was but fitting that God, who designed to reconcile the world through a new Adam, should also predestine a new Eve to be most closely associated with Him in the work of our common reparation.

And how prominent the Woman is in the divine plan for the Redemption of mankind! "Because thou hast done this, I will place enmities between thee and the Woman, between thy seed and her Seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel?" The woman had lent herself as a ready tool in the seduction of her husband. She had made herself an ally of the Evil One, and had formed an unholy friendship with him. Hence God, to undo the effects of her disloyalty, and to save the human race which she has doomed, will raise up another Woman, and will set undying enmity between her and the serpent,

between her Offspring and his; she, through her Son, shall crush the serpent's head, and the latter shall seek to fasten his fangs upon her heel.

Even though we should read, '*He* shall crush thy head,' not '*she*,' which is the reading of the Latin Vulgate, it is as the Offspring of the Woman, that the Redeemer of mankind is mentioned in the consoling prophecy.

Nor can it be doubted that the Woman, who here appears as the mortal enemy of the serpent, is the Blessed Virgin Mary. For who but her Divine Son was destined to crush the serpent's head, that is to say, to release mankind from the thralldom of Satan, to break his power, and to put an end to the empire of sin? The doom pronounced against the Evil One is, at the same time, a clear announcement of God's merciful design to save us from the consequences of our first parents' guilt, the earliest promise of a Redeemer to come.

Such is the constant teaching of the Fathers of the Church, and it is on the strength of their uniform interpretation of the passage of the book of Genesis, of which there is here question, that the doctrinal bull of Pope Pius IX, in setting forth the grounds for our faith in the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed

Lady, declares that “in this divine oracle the merciful Redeemer of the human race, that is to say, Christ Jesus, the Only-begotten Son of God, was *plainly and openly* referred to, as was also His most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, and that, at the same time, the enmity of both towards Satan was strikingly expressed.”

How is it possible, then, for Catholic commentators, in the face of such a clear declaration on the part of the Church, to hold that, although Mary is indeed designated in the prophecy of Genesis, she is so only in the spiritual or mystical sense; the woman, according to the literal meaning, being Eve, the type or figure of Mary? For if Mary is alluded to only in the mystical sense, then she is not designated *clearly and openly*, as the Pope declares, but only obscurely and under the veil of mystery.

True, it may not have been given to our first parents to salute in prophetic vision, and in her own very features their glorious daughter who in the distant ages was to bring forth the Saviour of the world, but the Woman of the prophecy was Mary, and no one else; Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, Mary in

the literal, historical and immediate sense of the words.

And her spiritual motherhood is also clearly apparent from this same passage of Holy Writ. For as the seed of the serpent is a collective term, including all those descendants of the first man and woman, who by their sinful lives bear within them the traits of the Evil One, so too the seed of the Woman, although it primarily refers to the Redeemer of mankind, to whom elsewhere in Holy Scripture the destruction of the empire of the demon is attributed, nevertheless, as a collective term, and contrasted with the seed of the serpent, seems necessarily to be understood, in a secondary sense, of all who in the course of ages will take their stand with Christ in His ceaseless conflict with the enemy of God.

They too are the spiritual offspring of the Woman, as forming with her Divine Son one mystical body, of which He is the head. They too will experience the rage of Satan until the end of time, but they too by their supernatural union with Christ, and by the efficacy of His grace communicated to them, will be forever associated with Him in His victory over the demon and all the assaults of hell. They are one with Him as the objects of the same re-

lentless hatred on the part of the serpent, and they are one with Him in inflicting upon the latter an overwhelming defeat. It follows then, that the Woman who is the Mother of the Saviour in the physical order, is also their Mother in the supernatural and spiritual order, in which they are identified with Him.

CHAPTER III

MARY COOPERATRIX IN THE REDEMPTION

It is not an exclusive privilege of Mary to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls. The priests of Holy Church, in the exercise of the ministry to which they have been called, are constantly laboring for that end, uniting and subordinating their activity to that of Christ, whose instillments they are, and discharging in His name a sacred embassy.

Nor does it detract in any way from the glory which belongs to the Only-begotten Son of God, if, in the most divine of all works, which is that of saving souls, others without number are admitted to some part and share. For it remains always true that their part is a dependent one, and that whatever results they accomplish are achieved only by the application of the merits of Christ through the channels appointed by Christ Himself. So, on a wider scale, God imparts to all creatures a share in His activity without in the least derogating from His own glory, because what-

ever the causality which He concedes to created agents, He himself remains the first and universal Cause, on whom all secondary causes are absolutely dependent for the power to act, as well as for the exercise of their activity.

But Mary surely has played, and still continues to play, a much more important and essential part in the reconciliation of mankind than any other, save only her Divine Son. Had she done no more for us than to give us our Redeemer, that of itself is a contribution to the salvation of the world, which places her in a class apart all by herself, but, in addition to this, she has never ceased to use her intercessory power in our behalf, and by the graces which she thus obtains for us, is ever bringing about the application to our souls of the fruits of the Redemption wrought for us by her Son.

We have seen that both by tradition and in Holy Writ, Mary is presented to us as a second Eve, as one, that is, who fulfils in the restoration of mankind a role closely corresponding to that of Eve in the ruin of our race. If then we define exactly the part which the latter had in bringing about the fall of man, we shall be prepared to understand what was Mary's part in effecting our redemption.

Now we know that it was not to Eve that God committed the destiny of the human race. Not she, but Adam was its head. Had Adam but remained loyal to his Maker, Eve's sin would have hurt herself alone; it would not have involved the whole race of men. It was Adam who held in his hand the lot of all his offspring, for weal or for woe. At their entrance into life, they were to inherit from him a human nature either richly endowed, as his own had been, or else vitiated at its source. In his obedience to his Creator all his posterity would be blessed, but if he revolted against the commandment laid upon him, his rebellion would entail the fall from grace and from the divine friendship of every one of his descendants even to the remotest ages.

As a fact, Adam sinned, and by his sin dragged all men into the abyss. But he was not alone in his guilt. Eve, who had herself been seduced by the Evil One, now lent herself to his wily scheme for the conquest of her husband. Turning tempter, she won him over to the demon's side; she persuaded him to eat of the forbidden fruit, she made him faithless to his Creator, and thus brought death into the world, and utter havoc on mankind.

True, it was Adam's sin which made us all

rebels against God, hopelessly shattering the ties of friendship which had bound us to Him, and rendering us the dupes and slaves of His wicked and cunning enemy. His revolt was sufficient of itself alone to implicate us all in his apostasy. As our head, he represented each and every one of us; we formed with him one moral person; he acted in our name, as well as in his own.

And yet, while nothing can palliate his guilt, must not she at whose solicitation he sinned, bear a heavy share of responsibility for the ruin of mankind? Did not she induce Adam to transgress his Maker's law, and to do that whereby we all have been undone? Is not our fall her work? If she had not formed with Satan an unholy alliance, and used her art of persuasion to drag her husband down into sin, would he have been vanquished by the demon's strategy? He was not deceived; His one motive was complacency towards his wife, and hence we may rightfully throw on her the responsibility for our degradation and most dismal ruin. We truly owe it all to her, even while in another and a stricter sense, we owe it all to Adam.

If then Adam and Eve cooperated in the fall of man, there is no *a priori* improbability

of a new Adam and a new Eve cooperating in the affair of man's redemption. In two distinct orders of causality, and on two different planes, the whole work of man's salvation may be attributed to one as a necessary factor, sufficient by Himself alone for the production of the result; to the other as actually, though not necessarily, concurring with Him in the reconciliation of mankind.

And the doom pronounced against the serpent, immediately after the fall, being, as has already been pointed out, in the nature of a complete turning of the tables upon the Evil One, it would seem that the prominence given to the Woman in the passage in which it is recorded, must be understood to imply a very effective and important part to be played by her in the utter discomfiture of Satan.

CHAPTER IV

MARY'S COOPERATION

A Direct Concurrence in the Work of the Redemption

It is Mary who has given to us our Saviour. That of itself makes us debtors to her for our salvation, and our debt is enhanced by the further fact that her consent to the Incarnation was asked, and that it was given with full knowledge of what she was consenting to.

We may conceive the case in which the Mother of the Redeemer might have been as little aware beforehand of the mission or destiny of her Son, as the mother of any merely human hero, and in which she might have had quite as little to do with the work subsequently accomplished by Him. Even so we should accord to her a certain degree of reverence and esteem, as we do to the mother of a great soldier or statesman or public benefactor, while perhaps we realize that her part in his achievements has been only remote and in-

direct. But is there ground for thinking that with Mary the case is different, and that her share in the redemption of mankind has been direct, and by no means limited to the gift to us of Jesus? Rather, must it not have been still more restricted than the part of the average mother, owing to the supernatural character of the work, for which no human training could have fitted the one destined to effect it? Where it is question of mere men and women, a mother's influence counts for much, and they are often little more or less than what a mother's lessons have disposed them to become. But salvation is a divine work. Our Saviour Himself is divine, and He comes divinely equipped from the outset for the task proposed to Him.

It might appear then that Mary's cooperation in the Redemption of mankind was purely remote or indirect. She was the Mother of the Redeemer, but, further than that, she had nothing to do with the work of the Redemption itself. Such would seem to be a correct statement of the Protestant view.

But it is far from being the traditional view of the Catholic Church, as enshrined in her liturgy, in the teaching of the Fathers, and in the hearts of her children everywhere. The

language of her great Doctors would seem indeed to be gross exaggeration, unless it be interpreted as embodying the idea which they had of the cooperation of our Lady in the work of Redemption as a whole: that is to say, of Mary's part not merely in the mystery of the Incarnation considered by itself alone, but in that mystery regarded as the first necessary step in the affair of the salvation of mankind.

When the Angel Gabriel came as ambassador from God to Mary, it was not to negotiate with her some private business. It was not merely to ask her consent to become the Mother of a Son, whose greatness he described to her in glowing words. He came to treat with her of the momentous affair of the salvation of the human race; of the birth of the Saviour of the world, the long promised Messiah, whose Mother she was asked to be; of the regeneration of mankind, and the setting up of an everlasting kingdom. All this is apparent from the Gospel narrative, and it is in this sense that the Fathers of the Church have uniformly interpreted it.

What the Angel asks of Mary is her consent to become the Mother of the Messiah, and thus to cooperate in the establishment of the

Messianic kingdom. The Son whom she shall bear is, as the Angel sets forth, the promised Redeemer, and in consenting to become His Mother, Mary will consent to do her part in bringing about the Redemption of mankind.

You cannot divide Jesus, as though He possessed a twofold personality. You cannot distinguish between Jesus, the private individual, and Jesus, the Saviour of the world. The Incarnation of the Son of God, through the maternal cooperation of the Virgin Mary, has no other purpose but the salvation of the human race. In consenting then to the Incarnation, Mary cooperates directly in the Redemption of the world, just as though the Incarnation had alone sufficed to save us. It is, in fact, the first step in the work of our salvation, and it is as such that Mary gives her consent to it.

Jesus, from the moment of His entering the world, is the price of our salvation. He takes to Himself our human flesh, and becomes incarnate in order that He may give Himself up for us to the death of the Cross. From the very first, He offers Himself as our ransom and the victim for our sins. And Mary, knowing from the angel's words the purpose of His coming, and consenting to become His

Mother, consents to the plan of the Redemption as proposed to her, in all its fulness, and thus, by the union of her will with the divine will, cooperates directly in the work of the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER V

MARY, OUR MOTHER

For the sincere Catholic it is little short of a truism to say that the Mother of God is also *our* Mother. Who would ever think of calling it in question? Not, assuredly, any one who adheres with simple faith to the lessons imbibed at his mother's knee, or in whom the keen edge of early religious conviction has not been dulled by intercourse with scoffers, or association with heretics or the worldly-minded.

In popular Catholic hymns, to which we instinctively turn for a reliable expression of the faith of the masses, as well as in the liturgy itself, which presents to us a more authoritative declaration of Catholic truth, the Mother of God is at the same time the Mother of mankind. In the canticles addressed to her to-day, no less than in those of the Middle Ages, we find the sweet title of Mother bestowed upon her as a matter of course, and as obviously befitting her, along with earnest appeals to her to exercise towards those who invoke her the

watchful care, the tender sympathy, and all the other attributes of motherhood.

True, we may not trace back to apostolic times, or even to the first ages of the Church, the practice of invoking her under the endearing name of Mother, but the lack of evidence in that respect is capable of being explained, especially when so little has come down to us from those remote times even on other heads of Christian doctrine, and the truth in question rests upon too solid foundations to be in any way impaired by such a negative argument

Mary's motherhood in our regard is surely comprised within the range of explicit Catholic teaching, as is clear from the frequency and emphasis with which it has been proclaimed in recent years in official utterances of the Holy See. In particular, the learned Pontiff, Leo XIII, who was so insistent in inculcating a deep, filial affection towards the Blessed Mother of God, on the part of pastors and faithful alike, asserts in the plainest words her spiritual motherhood, calling her Mother of mankind, Mother of the Church, and *our* Mother.

The firm persuasion in which all Catholics are, that Mary is truly their Mother, and that

she continues to discharge towards them, from her exalted throne in Heaven, the functions of the sweetest, most loving, and most powerful of mothers, is accountable in a large measure for that spirit of joyous expansiveness, which is so characteristic of the children of the true Church, when contrasted with those who are unhappily outside her pale. Mary is to the former as a loving Mother, radiating a perpetual sunshine in the midst of her children, while those religious denominations which know not Mary, are like the hearth, which a mother's death has left desolate, because the light of her smile has gone out, and the music of her voice has been hushed.

When we speak of Mary as our Mother, we refer, as is evident, not to a natural, physical motherhood, in which sense she has but one child, her Divine Son, Jesus Christ; but to a spiritual motherhood in the order of grace. At the same time, we apply the name to our Blessed Lady, not in a loose sense, and only as a tribute of respect and veneration for one so highly honored by Almighty God, and so full of motherly love for us, but in the strict meaning of the word. Mary is our Mother, because she has begotten us to the life of grace. In other words; it is to her, after God,

that we are indebted for our supernatural, spiritual life, the life of the children of God, and for whatever has to do with the production in us of that life, its preservation, and development. Such has ever been the faith of the Church, both in the east and in the west, as it would be easy to show at length, if we had space here for the numerous testimonies that might be adduced in support of this truth. We shall confine our quotations to a few passages wherein the Fathers of the Church bear witness to that faith.

“Hail to thee, Mother of God,” exclaims St Cyril of Alexandria, “through whom light has arisen upon the unfortunates who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death! Hail to thee, Mother of God, through whom every faithful soul is saved !”

Another writer of the Greek Church, once thought to have been St Epiphanius, says, addressing Mary: “Through thee men have become angels; through thee death has been destroyed, and hell rifled; through thee the idols are fallen, and the doctrine that is from heaven has conquered the world.”

And St Epiphanius himself, in a remarkable passage, has the following: “When Eve, under the veil of figure, received the name of

Mother of the living, she represented Mary, full of grace. In fact, Eve was called mother of the living, after having heard the sentence, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return/ that is to say, after her sin. To consider merely the exterior, sensible order, it is from Eve that the whole human race has sprung all over the world; but, in reality, it is through Mary that Life itself was ushered into the world. By having borne in her bosom the one to whom the name *Living* chiefly applies, she has become the *Mother of the Living*”

Again, St. John Damascene, in his homily on the Annunciation, which is little else but one long series of greetings to Mary, thus bears emphatic testimony to the debt we owe to her! “Hail to thee/” he says, “through whom we are enrolled in the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church! Hail to thee, through whom we possess the faith that enlightens and saves souls! Hail to thee, through whom we partake of the pure and redoubtable flesh of God made man, and taste the true bread of immortality! Hail to thee, through whom we are withdrawn from the gates of hell, and lifted up to heaven!”

The language of St. Germanus of Constantinople is even more striking! “O Virgin

Mother of God," he cries out, "man was rendered spiritual, when the Holy Ghost came down upon thee, as upon His temple. No one, O most holy, is filled with the knowledge of God, unless through thee; no one, O Virgin Mother, escapes from death unless through thee; no one is ransomed, unless through thee; no one receives the benefit of mercy, unless through thee; through thee, who hast deserved to enfold God within thee!"

"In the beginning," says St. Ephrem, deacon of the Syrian Church, "death passed to all men through the transgression of our first parent; to-day, through Mary, we have been transferred from death to life. In the beginning, the devil, taking hold of the ear of Eve, infused the poison, which made its way thence into the whole body; to-day, Mary, by lending the ear of faith to the word of God, has introduced into our human nature the Author of everlasting bliss."

The Latin Fathers too, in marking the contrast between the first woman, and the Mother of the Redeemer, declare that death has come through Eve, life through Mary; that, in Christ, the woman, after having been for so long the *mother of the dead*, has been made by God the *mother of the living*; "so true is it,"

as St. Peter Chrysologus observes, "that without Mary it was impossible either that death should be expelled, or that life should be restored."

St. Anselm feels quite unequal to the task of duly acknowledging our debt to Mary. "What shall I say," he asks, "that shall be worthy of my Creator and Saviour, of her who by her holiness cleanses me from my faults, by her integrity bestows upon me incorruptibility, by her virginity causes me to be loved by her Lord, and makes my soul the betrothed of my God? By thy fecundity, O Blessed Lady, a sinful world is justified ; a world that was lost is saved ; a banished world is restored to its true home !"

Lastly, from whom, if not from Holy Church, have we learned that beautiful invocation which we address to Mary, and which is daily on our lips : "Our *life*, our sweetness, and our hope?" The language may jar upon heretics, but it expresses the truth. Mary is our life, because she is the Mother of Him, who is the Life itself. Through her we have received Him, who has reconciled us to God, and who is for us the source of all grace, the cause of our supernatural life. She is *our* Mother according to the spirit, and in the

order of grace, because she is the Mother of our Divine Saviour according to the flesh, and in the order of nature.

It is to this great fact that the Fathers of the Church constantly refer us as to the basis on which rests the spiritual motherhood of Mary. Her divine maternity is the source of that universal influence which Mary has exerted in the work of the redemption and sanctification of souls. But of this at greater length in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER VI

FOUNDATION OF MARY'S SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

I—Merit of the Divine Maternity

When we say that Mary is *our* Mother because she is the Mother of God, the meaning is not that the bare fact of the Divine Maternity is enough to make God's Mother our Mother also. If Mary had given birth to the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, without lending her free concurrence towards the accomplishment of the mystery of the redemption; if the Divine Redeemer, in coming to save our race, had taken from her our human nature, but without her knowing beforehand either who He was, or what was the purpose of His coming, she would have been in that case, worthy of all honor on account of her exalted station, but she would not have been, strictly speaking, the Mother of mankind.

The Mother of God is *our* Mother, because, in the *first* place, Mary merited to be the

Mother of the Divine Redeemer, and prepared herself for that unexampled dignity by the constant practice of the highest virtue.* In the *second* place, the mystery of the Incarnation, whereby Mary became the Mother of God, was not effected without Mary's free consent. *Lastly*, by the perfect conformity of her will to the divine will, and by her union with her Son, Mary cooperated in His lifelong oblation of Himself for our salvation, and, in particular, in the bloody sacrifice by which He completed it on Calvary.

In the first place then, we are indebted to Mary for our supernatural life, because by the extraordinary purity of her heart, the beauty

•That Mary *merited* to be the Mother of God is a truth too often and too expressly enunciated by the Fathers and doctors of the Church, and in her liturgy, for any one to think of calling it in question. However, as theologians distinguish two lands of merit, one *de condigno*, to use the language of the school, which is merit in the strictest sense of the word, and the other, *de congruo*, implying a certain propriety or fitness in the bestowal of the recompense, it may be well to observe here once for all, that Mary did not and could not merit *de condigno* either the Incarnation itself, or, supposing this already decided upon, that it should be accomplished through her, in other words that she should be the Mother of the God-man. And the reason is simple. The Incarnation, as the first source or principle of grace, is also the first source of merit, and therefore cannot be the result of merit.

And at the same time it was eminently proper that God should give to His Son the purest of Virgins for His Mother, and that a Virgin as rich as she in privileges and in merits, should have no other son than a God made man. When then we say that Mary *merited* the Divine Maternity, it is of this merit *de congruo* that we should be understood to speak.

and splendor of her virtues, the incomparable treasure of her merits, she deserved that the Son of God should choose her for His Mother. There can be no doubt at all that she merited to be the Mother of the God-Man. The Holy Fathers, as well as the theologians of Holy Church, are at one in asserting that she did. The Church herself affirms it again and again, in explicit terms in her liturgy, and the Angel, who brings her word of the great things which are about to be accomplished in her, salutes her as full of grace and blessed among women.

Mary, according to a familiar axiom of the Fathers, must first conceive the Son of God in her heart, before conceiving Him in her flesh. That spiritual conception, which precedes and entails the other, consists in such interior preparation as will render her a worthy Mother of the Redeemer. When she has freely done her part to prepare for Him a worthy dwelling within her, the Son of God, ravished by her charms, will gladly make choice of her, in order that He may take from her our human nature, and as a Son of man make due atonement for our sins.

Certainly, if Mary, by her unexampled holiness, no less than by the singular privileges with which she was adorned, deserved

that, through her, God should bestow on us His Only-begotten Son, who alone is the source to us of the life of grace, and the principle of our spiritual regeneration, then clearly we are indebted to her for our supernatural life. And this is still more evident, if we consider how God, as it were, waited for centuries, from the fall of man till the appearance of Mary, before sending His beloved Son to redeem the world. She prepared the way whereby God had resolved to introduce His Son into the world. His coming depended upon that preparation: without it He would not have come.

Hence, in all truth, it is to Mary that we are indebted for our Redeemer, and in our Redeemer, for the life of grace, and all the blessings that have come to us through Him. For her to have given birth to the Redeemer of mankind, and to have become our Mother are, in point of fact, one and the same thing.

In claiming, however, that Mary merited the Divine Motherhood, we do not claim either that her merit was of the strictest kind, or that she merited the Incarnation itself of the Son of God. This mystery being the very source of all grace, and hence of all merit, cannot itself come within the object of merit;

and besides, being an infinite grace, and of infinite value, it is beyond the power of meriting of any pure creature.

But supposing the Incarnation to have been fixed upon by the divine choice as the means of accomplishing man's redemption, and supposing that the Son of God was to have a human Mother, then it was *eminently fitting* that that Mother should be Mary, whose purity, and innocence, and incomparable beauty recommended her as the only one fit to be so intimately associated with the Saviour of the world, as to furnish from her own substance the flesh of the Son of God made man.

CHAPTER VU

FOUNDATION OF MARY'S SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

II—Consent to the Incarnation

Mary was not an involuntary instrument in the accomplishment of God's merciful design for the redemption of mankind. An Angel was sent from the court of Heaven to ask her, in the name of the Most High, to consent to play the part assigned to her in the plan of salvation. The whole demeanor of the heavenly ambassador implies that he did not come with absolute orders, which God would accomplish whether His creature willed it or no. On the contrary, the deference with which the Angel addresses Mary, the detail into which he enters in setting forth the divine purpose, the explanations which he gives in reply to Mary's inquiry—all indicate that what he had come to ask was her free cooperation in the mystery that was about to be wrought in her. Else, why does he wait till Mary has acquiesced in what is proposed? Why does

he withdraw only when he has heard from her lips the words "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word"? Or why does Mary feel called upon to speak those words, if not because she recognizes that her consent has been made a necessary condition for the accomplishment of the great mystery, which for the moment is in abeyance, and in view of which God asks of her this supreme act of obedience and faith?

The Incarnation, whereby the Son of God became man for the ransom of the world, is, according to a constantly recurring thought, suggested to us by the Fathers of the Church, and having its confirmation in Holy Writ, a sort of spiritual marriage, or mysterious espousals of the Divine Word with our human nature, or of Christ with His Church, the latter union being the complement of the first. The Son of God assumes to Himself our human nature in the unity of the one Christ, in order that He may one day unite to Himself His Church in the unity of one mystical person.

But for the cementing of such an alliance, the law of nature requires the consent of the contracting parties, and in the order of grace we find God uniformly respecting the lawful

claims of nature. Hence it is not enough that the Son of God seeks the alliance : there must be some one to answer for our human nature, to accept in its name the proffered honor; and who so pure, so glorious as Mary, so fit to treat with God of the great affair of our salvation? The humanity of Christ, in which the espousals are to be realized, and which would have the foremost claim to be consulted, does not yet exist, except in Mary. She then must speak in behalf of all; she must say the word that shall seal forever the alliance between our human nature and the Son of God.

This moreover is clearly required by the antithesis between the first and the second Eve—an antithesis which forms the subject of a previous chapter of the present treatise. It was from the very start that the first woman freely cooperated in the work of our destruction, by offering to her husband the fruit which brought death to him and to our race. Hence, if the antithesis is to be perfect, Mary, the second Eve, must also cooperate from the first in the work of our salvation, and by freely associating herself with her Divine Son in the oblation which He makes to the Father from the outset, must present to us the fruit which once more gives life to the world.

Mary knew from the Angel's message that the Son whom she should bear, was the long-expected Messiah, the Saviour of the world. She surely knew from her meditation of the Prophets, even if we take no account of the extraordinary lights which must have been vouchsafed to her personally, as the Queen of Prophets, that the promised Redeemer was to pay the ransom of our sins, cancelling all our debts in His Precious Blood, and when she acquiesced in the proposal made to her by the Angel, she gave Jesus to us by her own free act

But in giving Jesus to us, she gave Him for what He was, and what she knew Him to be, and hence, as in Jesus we have everything, she gave us all things together with Him. To her then we owe the salvation, which Jesus brought to us. To her we owe that spiritual life of grace, without which there is no escape from the death of sin. No one then is saved, except through Mary. No one comes to life, except through Mary. She then is our Mother, the Mother of all the living.

Nor need we have any misgiving, lest, if we should make the Incarnation of our Lord to depend on Mary's free consent, we should thereby jeopardize the whole plan of man's

redemption. Mary was, to use her own words, "the handmaid of the Lord." Thoroughly and solely devoted to the fulfilment of God's holy will, she needed only to be assured that her consent was a necessary condition for the carrying out of the divine plan for the redemption of mankind, in order to be persuaded to give it with the most perfect abandonment of herself into the hands of God.

Besides, the divine wisdom knows all the secrets of the human heart, and has only to adapt His graces to the dispositions of His creatures, and to the end that He has in view, in order infallibly to obtain their consent to what He proposes, without in the least violating the liberty with which He has endowed them.

CHAPTER VIII

FOUNDATION OF MARY'S SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

III—Union with Christ on Calvary

It was no mere matter of chance that Mary's Son was the Only-begotten of the Father, the Redeemer of Mankind, who was to ransom the world by His death on the Cross. Mary had been prepared beforehand for the glory of the Divine Maternity by the extraordinary privileges which had been conferred upon her, and she had earned for herself that dignity by the altogether exceptional fidelity with which she had corresponded throughout life with every grace vouchsafed to her, thus amassing an immense treasure of merit, ere the Angel, on the part of God, came to salute her full of grace, and to ask her co-operation in the work of the Redemption.

But it was not for herself alone that Mary deserved the divine fecundity, through which she became the Mother of our merciful

Saviour. Her deep humility, it is true, would never have permitted her to aspire consciously to the high honor of which God deemed her worthy, and yet, in point of fact, it is through her, and by reason of her exalted merit, that God has bestowed upon us the gift of His Only-begotten Son, with whom and in whom He has given us all things. We are all debtors then to Mary for the life of grace which her Son has purchased for us, a truth which becomes the more apparent, when to Mary's life-long merit we add her free consent to become the instrument of God's mercy towards us, and her readiness to accept, along with the honor of the Divine Maternity, all its grave responsibilities and crushing sorrows.

By the consent which she gave to the mystery of the Incarnation, as proposed to her by the Angel Gabriel in the name of God, Mary became our Mother. For the Incarnation looked forward to the Passion as to the condition of our ransom, and the Son of God became man that we might have life through His death. That, in fact, is why Mary's consent was needed, and why God left it to her free choice to say whether or not she would accept a dignity involving so great a sacrifice. Since then from the moment at which Our

Blessed Lady declared to the Angel her acquiescence in her Maker's will, our Redemption was assured, it is also from that moment that we must date her spiritual Motherhood in our regard.

Something however is wanting to make that Motherhood in every sense complete. Mary has yet to tread with Jesus the dolorous way of the Passion, she must ascend with Him to Calvary, she must stand beside His cross, till He expires upon it in torment and in shame. On this condition only will He proclaim to the whole world her Motherhood ; for then only will it have received its full complement and crown. The Woman whose divine offspring is to crush the serpent's head, may not be absent from the last scene of that great drama, in which Eve, her faithless counterpart, was at first so cruelly conspicuous.

True it is that Mary, in consenting to become the Mother of our Blessed Redeemer, had already consented to the privations, and sufferings and ignominious death, whereby her innocent Son was to pay to the divine justice the debt of our sins. She was well aware of the plan of the redemption of the human race, with which her profound meditation of the inspired prophecies had rendered her fa-

miliar, even if we fail to take account of the fuller and more splendid revelations, which we may well assume to have been vouchsafed to Mary personally, as to the future Queen of Prophets. She knew therefore that the Messiah, whom she was to bear, was to be a Man of sorrows; that He was to take upon Himself the iniquities of us all, and that by His stripes we should be healed, and when she accepted the proffered dignity of the Divine Motherhood, she accepted with it all the poignant grief and anguish which, like a sword, must pierce her own intrepid soul.

She foresaw and accepted it, but this is not yet enough. Though any single act of the Man-God would have sufficed to reconcile a thousand worlds, His acts are not accepted singly, but as forming part of one grand whole, the work of man's Redemption, which will be completed only when the Redeemer expires on the Cross. In this work Mary was associated from the time at which she consented to become the Mother of our Saviour, and there would be a lack of unity in the divine plan, if, united with Jesus at the outset, and for a portion of His work, she were no longer so at the hour of its completion.

Hence Maiy stands by the Cross of Jesus,

bringing forth her spiritual children in anguish and bitterness of soul. As the "Mother of all the living/' she must give them life through the Passion of her Son, and as their future comforter in all their sorrows, she must learn compassion through her own most grievous pangs.

Jesus was not alone in the earlier stages of His life-work, wherein He pledged Himself to die, that we might live. It was as He reposed on Mary's bosom that He took upon Himself the solemn engagement wholly to sacrifice Himself for us. It was under her roof, and beneath her fostering care that He grew up as a lamb destined for the slaughter. And hence, when at length the sword is lifted up, and is on the point of being plunged into the flesh of the innocent Victim, Mary is of necessity there at His side. For, ere it can rend the fragile wall of clay, and open to us the fount of never-ending life, it must first pass even through the heart of the sorrowful Mother.

It is on Calvary that the Only-begotten wins for us the grace of the divine adoption by the complete cancelling of the debt which we contracted by our sins. How proper then that Mary too should be at hand, cooperating

with her Son, by entire conformity of will, in the last phase of His life-long sacrifice, and thus completing and crowning her own spiritual Motherhood with regard to those on whom it has pleased God to confer the priceless boon of the adoption as of children !

Absolutely speaking, Our Lady's acquiescence in the immolation of the Divine Victim, as involved in her consent to the Incarnation of the Son of God for the salvation of the world, would have been all-sufficient to constitute her Mother of our race, even if it had been no part of God's plan that she should be actually present at the death of the Redeemer. As a matter of fact, however, we know that she was destined to stand on Calvary's height at the supreme moment, and, by the unfailing union of her will with the divine will, was to have her part in the bloody oblation, whereby Christ offered Himself to the Father for the redemption of mankind. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the foreknowledge of her cruel transfixion was at first withheld from Mary, when we know it to have been revealed to holy Simeon, who prophesied that a sword should pierce her soul.

Mary then, in consenting to become the Mother of our Redeemer, already accepted the

sacrifice that was asked of her in all its most distressing features, and when at length she stood beside the Cross on Calvary to receive the last gasp of her dying Son, she was but making good the complete donation she had long since made to us of Him who is our life, and who has willed that we should share with Him all that He has, and that, in the order of grace, His Mother should be our Mother, even as His Father is also our Father.

CHAPTER IX

MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

It is needless to observe that when we claim that God's Mother is also our Mother, we do not ascribe quite the same meaning to the word in both uses. For in the case of her Divine Son, Mary is His Mother, in the sense that she has physically begotten Him, whereas in our case, she is our Mother only in the spiritual, not in the physical order, though, at the same time, no other word would express near so graphically the relation in which Mary stands to us, nor stir within us, to the same extent, the strong and tender emotions which should correspond to all her watchful care in our regard.

For she has not merely bestowed upon us the supernatural life, by giving to us our most Blessed Redeemer, and all that has come to us through Him, but she is incessantly occupied with whatever concerns us, procuring for us all that may nourish and strengthen in us the life of grace that we owe to her, and guarding us against the dangers that threaten to

steal it away, and to make void in us the Passion of her Son.

When then we give to Mary the title of Mother of Grace or Mother of Divine Grace, we imply that hers is a spiritual Motherhood in our regard, a Motherhood in the order, not of nature, but of grace. She is the Mother of Grace, because we are begotten of her to the life of grace, being indebted to her, after Jesus, for our supernatural life.

Among the similar forms of expression which we apply to the ever Blessed Virgin, it would perhaps be hard to find one whose meaning is exactly parallel, yet a comparison with some of them may not be without advantage towards a better understanding of the title which we are at present considering. Thus we speak of Mary as the "Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope," attributing to her words primarily spoken by heavenly Wisdom concerning herself (Eccli. xxiv, 24). The latter is the mother of these virtuous qualities, inasmuch as all spring from her, and hence the words may not inappropriately be applied to Mary, as in fact they are in the liturgy of the Church, to signify that the effect of devotion to her is to produce these same virtues in the souls of

her clients. It is then in a like sense that the title, "Mother of Divine Grace" is given to her as conveying the idea that Mary is, together with her Divine Son, and through Him, the source of grace to all those who live the supernatural life.

Again, Mary is called "Mother of Mercy," not only by reason of the plentifulness with which mercy is apportioned to those who seek it at her hands, but also in the sense that it is her special, one might almost say, her exclusive prerogative, inasmuch as God, while reserving to Himself the dispensing of justice to all creatures, has, as it were, made over to Mary the half of His kingdom, by empowering her to deal with every sort of misery, to which mankind is heir, healing the sick, relieving the distressed, comforting the sorrowful everywhere. Mary is the Mother of mercy, because mercy proceeds from her as from an abundant, never-failing source, and because mercy is her characteristic role in the great drama of human life. So too she is the Mother of Grace, because whatever grace is bestowed on us, is granted, as we shall see, through the universal mediation of Mary, whereas apart from her there is no approach for us to the fountainhead of all heavenly gifts and blessings.

CHAPTER X

MARY, OUR MEDIATRIX

It is quite true that, according to the inspired teaching of St Paul, there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. That is to say, there is but one whose role in the great affair of our salvation is indispensably necessary; but one who could and did save us by offering to the justice of God condign satisfaction for our sins.

When then we ascribe to Mary a part in the work of our redemption, we do not by any means propose to put her on a footing of equality with Christ, her Divine Son. There is no thought of affirming the necessity of her cooperation. The question turns on a point of fact, and must be determined solely from the sources of divine revelation, that is to say, from Holy Scripture and tradition.

Nor do we, by asserting the fact of Mar/s cooperation with our Divine Saviour, detract in any way from the value of His atonement, as though our debt were not fully paid by

Him. Christ offered to the Father a superabundant satisfaction for the sins of mankind. He alone has paid the full price of our ransom, and to this price no one else has contributed a single mite or farthing. Nor could anyone have done so, seeing that, by reason of the revolt of our first parents, in which the whole human race was involved, we all alike had need of being ransomed, before we could regain the grace and favor of our Maker.

And yet, in the whole work of the redemption, it was His will to associate His Blessed Mother with Himself by indissoluble ties. The part she takes in our restoration is indeed essentially inferior to His. She does not pay even the smallest fraction of our debt. On the plane on which His mediation is exercised, He is absolutely alone. Yet from first to last, she cooperates in His work by the entire conformity of her will with His. Hence her role, though of a lower order, is no less universal than that of the one Mediator; our obligations to her comprise in their extent the whole redeeming office of her Son.

When we speak of Mary as our Mediatrix, we may have in mind either the function which she exercised in the work of the redemption in general, or the position which she

holds in our regard as go-between in our relations with Jesus.

From the former point of view, Mary's mediation is inseparably bound up with that of Jesus. Although He might have wrought our salvation alone, without taking Mary into His confidence, or inviting her to share in His work, as a matter of fact, He did not choose to do so, but willed that she should be present at each successive stage of His mortal career, renewing, continuing, completing, what she had done at the Incarnation, and that everywhere His oblation of Himself should be presented to the Father through Mary's hands. This is what we see to have taken place at His first entrance into the world; and again when, in a more explicit manner, He took upon Himself the office of Saviour in the mystery of the Circumcision, and received from Mary the Holy Name of Jesus; and once more, when He renewed His offering at the Presentation in the Temple; and finally when the holocaust was completed by His death upon the Cross.

In every phase of the life of the Divine Victim—when He first consecrates Himself to His work, when He is nourished and reared as a lamb destined for the sacrifice, or when

at length He sheds the last drop of His blood for the restoration of the world—Mary has her place beside Him, thoroughly at one with Him by an unswerving fidelity to the engagement which she contracted at the Incarnation, and ready to yield up her beloved Son to all the severities of the Divine Justice, in order that by His stripes we may be healed, and by His death we may have life everlasting.

In the Prophets, we find the Woman inseparably associated with the promised Redeemer and Mediator in the work of salvation, even as the first woman was closely leagued with Adam in the destruction of mankind. And when Christ came to fulfil the Prophets, He appeared with Mary, overthrowing the power of Satan, and turning back his wiles upon his head. As we owed our fall to a guilty group, so it is another gracious and beneficent group which is everywhere in evidence, when there is question of our restoration to our former high estate. Mary's mediation is in reality one with that of Jesus, who, though He might have willed otherwise, has seen fit to give Himself to us only through her. His assumption of the role of Mediator He made dependent on Mary's consent, and it was her motherly offices, exhibited towards Him

through life, which made Him ready for the sacrifice, whereby He was to reconcile the world to God. Plainly then, as an important factor in the mediation of her Son, Mary is well entitled to be called our Mediatrix.

There is however a further sense in which the name may rightly be applied to her; she is for us a happy go-between in all our relations with Jesus. Thus it is she from whom we first received our loving Saviour, and who bestows on us, as comprised in that supreme gift, all the graces of salvation. Again, it is she who introduces us to Jesus, as she once introduced the Shepherds and the Wise Men, and who pleads for us before His heavenly throne, drawing down upon us mercy and endless blessings.

CHAPTER XI

MARY, MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

I—Acquisition of Grace

The purpose of our Blessed Lord in taking to Himself our human nature was that He might give His life and die for the salvation of mankind. The Incarnation is not simply for itself, but for our redemption, and though the latter is a work comprising many parts, yet these are all unified by the end towards which they are directed, our salvation through Jesus. Distinct in themselves, the mysteries of the life of Christ all point to Calvary, as their fulfilment ; the shadow of the Cross hanging over them gives the true perspective, without which they can be but imperfectly understood.

And Mary was privileged—who can doubt it?—to view the mystery of the Word made flesh, and then, as they gradually unfolded themselves, all the events of the life of the Man-God, in the light which the Passion shed upon them. It was with this light streaming

in upon her mind, that she gave her consent to the Incarnation, and to all that it involved, and was thus a cooperatrix or mediatrix in the redemption as a whole, and hence in every particular that is comprised in it.

True, in the strictest sense of the term, our Mediator is one: for Christ alone by His atonement reconciles us to the Father. At the same time, it is Mary, who, by giving to Him our human nature, makes of Him an apt Mediator—not God alone, nor yet man alone, but the Man-God subsisting in both natures—and who by her union of will with His, offers Him to fulfil in our regard that role. In this sense, as being so important a factor in the mediation of her Son, she herself is truly entitled to the name of Mediatrix.

Now it is by the death of Christ that we have been redeemed, and yet so long as we do not apply to our souls individually the satisfactions and merits of the Redeemer, His self-immolation will avail us nothing. Hence the immediate effect of Our Lord's death is to win for us countless graces, without which our salvation cannot be secured. The acquisition of those graces is undoubtedly a part of the work of the redemption. For it is the grace of God which rouses the human will to the

performance of salutary acts, and equips it with the requisite light and strength to perform them. Such acts may be wholly interior, as those of faith, hope, love, contrition, or they may be directed towards the worthy use of the Sacraments or other means of grace, but it is only through them that we appropriate to ourselves the merits of Christ's atonement, and thus enter upon the way of salvation, or, having already entered upon it, go forward with a greater or less degree of celerity.

The treasure of grace, accumulated by our Divine Mediator in behalf of sinful man, is quite inexhaustible. As there is no end to the merit of the Man-God, so there can be no end to the store of grace, which is laid up for the redeemed, and of which they can freely avail themselves at every moment, and for every need that can possibly befall them.

This treasure our Blessed Lord amassed, not by His death alone, but by His life and death, offered up to the Father and accepted by Him as one grand oblation for the reconciliation of the whole world, and the sanctification of all the redeemed. In this offering Mary concurred, in the first place, by preparing in her virginity a fit temple for the es-

pousals of the Word with our human nature,* and secondly, by the consent which she gave to the whole plan of the redemption, as submitted to her by the Angel Gabriel, and by her subsequent entire conformity of will with that of the Redeemer, her Divine Son, even to the completion of His sacrifice on the Cross.

But if she has part in the work of the redemption as a whole, then, by the very fact, she has also part in all those graces which are prepared for us in view of the merits of the Redeemer, and for the working out of our salvation. For they are included in the work of the redemption. Deservedly then do we give to Mary the title of Mediatrix of Grace.

•Mary did not merit, it is true, her Immaculate Conception, whereby God Himself undertook to prepare in her a worthy dwelling for His Son, but she did merit, *de condigno*, that steady increase of grace and holiness, which at length won for her the unique privilege of bearing in her womb the Incarnate Son of God.

CHAPTER XII

MARY, MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

II—The Distribution of Grace

The piling up of an immense and quite inexhaustible treasure of grace, to be forever at the disposal of man for his spiritual necessities ceased with the death of the Mediator on the Cross. But the great work of man's redemption did not stop there. The graces which had been won for us by the life and sufferings of the Redeemer, were intended to be used. They can only bring salvation to the individual soul, when, by the appointed channels — such as prayer, the Sacraments, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass — they are brought within reach of those for whose sake they have been amassed. So that after the question of the acquisition of grace, there comes another, no less important, which concerns its distribution, and here, no less than in the previous question, we assert that Mary is intimately and inseparably associated with her Divine Son in His

office of Mediator, and hence further entitled to be called Mediatrix of Grace.

In fact, it is of her part in the distribution of grace that we chiefly think, when we speak of her mediation in our behalf. This is clear from certain forms of speech to which we are accustomed, and by which the faith of the Church in this regard is vividly expressed. Thus nothing is more common in the language of the faithful than to refer to Mary as the *channel* or universal *dispenser* of divine grace.

It does not follow as a logical consequence, that if Mary cooperated in the acquisition of grace, she must also have part in its distribution, but there is here unquestionably a certain propriety, which impels us to that conclusion. The hands that have amassed the riches, should, it would seem, have the joy and the privilege of distributing them.

Certainly, the acquisition of grace and its distribution belong to one and the same work of redemption. The purpose for which so rich a store has been accumulated, is that it may be dealt out liberally to those who stand in need of it, and there would be a lack of unity in the divine plan, if Mary, so closely associated with Jesus in the first part of His work, were not equally so in the latter. She was with

Him on earth from first to last, from the inception of His mission to its completion : she must likewise be with Him now in Heaven, continuing in us the great affair for which He became incarnate.

Christ Himself, having once labored and died for us, does not, as it were, pass us over to the Father, that the latter may dispense to us the fruits of His toils and His sufferings, whilst He himself absorbed in His glory and beatitude, is all forgetful of those whom He has ransomed with His blood. On the contrary, He continues ceaselessly to intervene in our behalf, offering for us to His Heavenly Father His infinite merits and satisfactions, and causing the floods of grace to descend upon us, in order to achieve in us the end for which He suffered and died. For not only does God do nothing in the supernatural order save in view of the merits of Christ; He does nothing except in view of the actual intervention of His Divine Son in our behalf.

Since then Mary had her place beside Jesus, so long as there was question of ransoming us, reconciling us, meriting for us all the graces necessary for our salvation, she must in like manner have her place beside Him now, where there is question of securing for

us by actual intercession in Heaven the graces prepared for us in view of the merits of Christ.

It is Mary who gave us Jesus, that He might save us from our sins, and incorporate us in His everlasting Kingdom. How can we possibly doubt that with Him she has given us all things, and hence those graces too whereby we are saved, and by which we become members of His Heavenly Kingdom?

At the Incarnation, the whole price of our ransom was delivered to Mary: for that price is Jesus. Again, on Calvary, when payment has actually been made, our ransom is deposited in Mary's hands, to intimate to us, no doubt, that all the graces of the supernatural life, which the death of Christ has purchased for us, must come to us through Mary's intervention, even as Christ, the author of grace, is Mary's gift to us. She must present Him to the Father, with His merits and His satisfactions, in order that they may be accepted in behalf of all mankind, and may draw upon us the graces by which salvation is actually achieved, and in this precisely Mary's mediation mainly consists.

Note.—No one, we think, will consider it amiss, if we add a word here concerning the function of the Holy Spirit in the distribution of grace. There is not, it is true, any operation of the Divinity, having for its term an exterior effect, which

is in reality proper to this or that Divine Person. All operations of the Godhead thus terminated are common to the three Persons. Nevertheless, by reason of the personal characteristic of the Holy Ghost, which is love, those operations of God in the world in which love is specially manifested, are attributed to the third Person, as if He alone were their cause.

Thus it is that the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in which the love of God towards man shines forth with such transcendent lustre, is ascribed to the Holy Ghost as to its efficient cause. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" was the Angel's reply to Mary's query as to how his word was to be accomplished, and we are wont to say of her Divine Son, that He was conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

So, in like manner, the whole order of grace is attributed to the third Person of the ever Blessed Trinity. He is "the Spirit of the adoption as of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father," and sanctifying grace, which makes us children, being a participation of the Divine Nature, is poured abroad in our hearts, together with divine charity, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.

If then, in these pages, we claim for Mary the exalted rôle of universal distributor of grace, we are not assuredly ascribing to her a function that is the peculiar prerogative of the Divine Spirit. The Holy Ghost is the Author of grace, its physical and efficient cause. He is the "Father of the poor," without whose largess we should all be poor indeed, and utterly destitute. He is the "Giver of gifts," from whom descends upon us every good and perfect gift, and who is Himself, in fact, the best of all gifts, the most delightful Guest of the soul, and its sweetest Comforter.

Mary, on her part, is the channel through which all grace must flow in upon the souls of men. She is however something more, far more, than a mere inert instrument of God's bounties towards us. She herself is full of grace, and from the bosom of her Divine Spouse she has imbibed, in overflowing measure, of His boundless love for all mankind, and is ever active to procure for each and every one of us, by fervent and ceaseless intercession, such heavenly gifts as may assure to us the everlasting indwelling in our hearts of the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, and that endless life which is its blessed fruit.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNIVERSAL MEDIATION OF MARY

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That Mary is our Mediatrix in all that appertains to salvation, we have seen in the foregoing chapters. To her we owe it that an infinite store of heavenly grace has been laid up for us through the merits of the Redeemer, her Divine Son. Mary's hands are busy too distributing the graces, which Jesus has amassed. But can we state with certainty just how far the dispensation of divine grace has been committed to her?

To be sure, it is commonly said, in the language of St. Bernard, that it is God's will that we should have all things through Mary. But is this pious exaggeration, or is it literal truth?

Obviously there is a sense in which we have all things through her, for through her we have Jesus, and the gift of Jesus includes all others; because all good things, absolutely without exception, are bestowed upon us only in view of the merits of Jesus.

But this is not the popular understanding of the axiom, generally received, that all good

things come to us through Mary's hands. The idea that is current everywhere among the faithful represents Mary as at every moment interesting herself in our behalf in heaven, and procuring for us by her actual intercession all the graces whereby we hope to attain salvation. Her cooperation in the matter of grace is not a thing of the past, but an ever present consoling fact, and Mary in heaven is the channel by which all Christ's favors descend upon us, even as it is through her, and in union with her, that during His mortal life He won for us whatever title we have to His gifts and graces.

Evidently there is question here only of gifts of the supernatural order, and of such things in general as may contribute to the salvation of our souls. For Christ Himself did not come to put us in possession of mere earthly riches, or honors, or pleasures, but to lead us to the Kingdom of God. Besides, the phraseology itself commonly expresses this limitation. For we say that Mary is the channel of God's *grace*, and the Mother of *divine grace*.

What is then the value of the axiom which we are considering? Does the belief in Mary's universal mediation rest upon a sound theo-

logical basis, or is it an opinion that may be safely rejected as lacking solid proof, and appealing to sentiment rather than to reason? We shall undertake, in the present chapter, to show that it is abundantly supported by arguments drawn from Catholic tradition, and confirmed by Holy Scripture, and, in doing so, we shall avail ourselves of the brief summary, which is presented by the writer in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, to whom reference has been made in our preface, and who himself acknowledges his indebtedness to Father Terrien, S. J., and his great work, "La Mere de Dieu et des Hommes."

And first of all, many titles are ascribed to our Blessed Lady by the piety of the faithful in every clime, which, strictly speaking, are applicable only to Christ, the divine Mediator. It is of Him that they are spoken in Holy Writ, and it is to Him that they are attributed by the teaching of the Catholic Church. And yet hundreds upon hundreds of times, from the remotest periods, we find them applied to the Blessed Virgin in liturgical hymns, in homilies, in panegyrics, in a word, in all sorts of compositions in Mary's honor, even among the Greek and oriental schismatics, so long separated from the Church.

All are familiar with the remarkable language of the *Salve Regina*, in which Mary is saluted by the faithful of all lands as "our life, our sweetness, and our hope." Elsewhere she is the *light*, that enlightens the whole world; the living *fount* of immortality, of all graces and holiness; or the true *vine*, the fertile vine, ever in bloom, and laden with grapes, which bring heavenly joy.

She is the *breath* of Christians, the *root* of liberty, restored by her to the human race. Better still, she is the *cause of salvation*, the mother of universal salvation, the salvation of the world, the salvation of all men even to the ends of the earth. She is the *common source* of our happiness, of our renovation, in a word of all blessings; the *repairer* and *restorer* of the human family, the *redemption* of mortals: through whom we have passed from death to life, from darkness to wonderful light. She is the *royal bridge* uniting heaven and earth, the *hope* of Christians, and their *only hope*; our refuge and our strength.

These titles are given to Mary again and again, in all languages, and under every variety of form. They are to be understood as is evident from the context and from other circumstances, only in a secondary sense, and

are applied to her with dependence on her Son.

And what do we thence conclude? That Mary, through her association with Jesus in His office of Mediator and Redeemer, partakes, in a measure quite incommunicable to any other, of all that is included in the above and similar titles, when understood of Our Saviour Himself. The whole Church then regards her, and has ever regarded her, as our Mediatrix; and as the expressions, or formulas, used are not in any sense restrictive, she is our universal Mediatrix, not only for the acquisition, but also for the distribution of graces. In other words, Mary's part in the work of our salvation, though only secondary, is no less general, no less extensive, than that of Christ her Son.

Another class of testimonies to the traditional view, according to which no grace is accorded to anyone except through Mary, is drawn from what is taught by theologians and Fathers of the Church respecting the position which she occupies in the mystical body of Christ. Christ is the Head, the faithful are the members, Mary is the *neck*. For, as in the physical body all movement and sensation is communicated from the head to the other por-

tions of the organism only by means of the neck, so, in the Church of Christ, all spiritual gifts proceeding from Christ must pass through Mary's hands before reaching the body of the faithful.

"Christ," says the distinguished and saintly Cardinal Bellarmine, "is the Head of the Church, and Mary is its *neck*. All gifts, all graces, all heavenly influences descend from Christ, as from the Head, by means of Mary, as the neck, to the body of the Church; and as, in the human body, there is more than one hand, more than one arm, more than one shoulder, more than one foot, so in the Church there are many apostles, many martyrs, many confessors, many virgins, many widows; but there is only one Son of God, and one alone is the Mother of God. Oh, unhappy they who do not recognize, do not venerate such a neck! For just as a limb, if it wished to receive the wholesome influences that flow from the head, but scorned to receive them through the neck, would wither and die, so they who desire to have life and grace from Christ, but do not wish to have them through Mary, remain, and will forever remain, parched and hungry."

A further argument in favor of Mary's universal mediation may be deduced from

such common formulas as proclaim that "there is no salvation except through Mary/' and that "to implore God's favors independently of Mary is to wish to fly without wings," a form of expression employed by St. Antoninus of Florence, echoing perhaps the thought of the poet Dante, as found in the 38th canto of the *Paradiso*. For, if Mary is not the Mediatrix, through whose hands all graces must pass, then it is not impossible to obtain grace, and hence salvation, without having recourse to her.

Space does not pennit us to accumulate particular passages from the Fathers and theologians of the Church in support of the thesis which we are upholding, and we must refer those of our readers who desire to examine them, to such authorities as Fr. Terrien, S.J., in his great work, "La Mere de Dieu et des Hommes," Part II, as well as to other authors who, like him, have discussed the subject at length. We shall only observe here that the question was not raised by Catholic writers, nor treated by them *ex professo*, until after the fifteenth century, and hence although there is not wanting an abundance of testimonies even from the earliest ages, it is chiefly in more recent times, that is, from the seven-

teenth century on, that we find the doctrine set forth in express terms, and with entire theological precision.

We cannot however forbear inserting here a most explicit and striking testimony to Mary's universal mediation from a discourse of the eloquent St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, who flourished early in the eighth century. "As for us," he says, addressing Our Lady, "far removed from God, amid the multitude of our sins, it is through thee that we have sought God and found Him, and finding Him have been saved. For thy protection, O Mother of God, is mighty unto salvation, and needs no other intermediary with God. Truly, thy bounty has no limits, thy protection is never weary; thy favors are without number. For no one is saved, unless through thee, O all holy; no one is delivered from his ills, save through thee, O immaculate; no one obtains any gift, unless through thee, O all-pure; no one receives mercy and grace, unless through thee, O all-venerable! Wherefore, who will fail to call thee blessed? Who will fail to exalt thee, if not as he should, at least with his whole heart? Thee, replete with glory; thee, filled with beatitude; thee, great and admirable, who hast received from thy

Son and God so many great gifts; thee, who on that account art praised by all generations!" (Sermon on Mary's Girdle, Migne, XCVm, 380.)

And indeed, when we reflect that the acquisition of grace and its distribution, as has been already observed, make up one and the same complete work, we see how fitting it is that Mary should cooperate in both its parts in the same manner, that is, quite universally. The work of redemption, from starting point to completion, that is, from the Incarnation to the moment when it reaches the individual soul, is an uninterrupted stream, which should in consequence flow always through the same channels.

It would seem in fact to be for the purpose of removing any uncertainty on this head, that the inspired text itself presents Mary to us as associated with our Blessed Redeemer in the dispensing of His most signal favors. And first of all, we see her taking a conspicuous part in the sanctification of the Baptist. It is Jesus, to be sure, who is the primary cause of the wonderful effect produced in the soul of the yet unborn infant, but it is at the sound of Mary's voice that his sanctification is effected, and that both he and Elizabeth, his mother,

are filled with the Holy Ghost. Mary then is plainly indicated, in the inspired word, as the instillment employed by the Redeemer of mankind for the spiritual regeneration of His holy Precursor, the first marvel wrought by Our Lord in the interior realm of souls.

Similarly, she appears as Mediatrix in the first of His miracles in the physical order. For it was at her suggestion and prayer that her Son changed the water into wine at the wedding-feast in Cana of Galilee, manifesting thus His glory, and winning the whole-hearted allegiance of His disciples.

Now it is entirely in keeping with the practice of the inspired writers, of the New Testament especially, rather to hint at what may be deduced, than needlessly to multiply explicit statement, where at least the inference is obvious enough to such as are spiritual-minded, and able to penetrate beyond the dry husk of the letter. In the present instance, the plain inference is that Mary, who is thus presented to us as Mediatrix on the first two occasions on which her Divine Son signally displays His power for the advantage of mankind, will always have her place beside Him whenever there is question of the distribution of His favors or of drawing souls to Him.

God's gifts are without repentance, and having once given Jesus to us through Mary, "that order," as Bossuet remarks, "is not subject to change. It is, and it will always be true, that having received through her charity the universal principle of grace, we shall also receive through her mediation its varied applications in all the different states of which the Christian life is composed."

The same truth, so honorable to Our Lady, and so consoling to her children, is also clearly taught by the Supreme Pontiffs themselves, who, without actually defining it as of faith, have openly inculcated it in various documents addressed to the flock of Christ. Thus Pius IX, in his encyclical letter, *Ubi primum*, addressed to the Bishops of the whole Catholic world, speaks as follows :

"You well know, Venerable Brothers, that the whole motive of our confidence lies in the holy Virgin, seeing that God has bestowed upon her the fulness of every good thing; so that if there is in us any hope, any grace, any safety, we know that it is all derived from Mary. Such is the will of Him, who has willed that we should have all things through Mary." In like manner, Leo XIII, in his encyclical, *Jucunda* (1894), approves the opin-

ion of St. Bernardine of Sienna, to the effect that God dispenses all his graces through her.

And Pius X, in his encyclical, *Ad diem illium*, of the 2nd February, 1904, in which he treats at length of Mary's universal mediation, deducing it from her spiritual motherhood in our regard, says as follows:

“By this community of suffering and identity of will between Jesus and Mary, she merited to become most deservedly the Repairer of the ruin of the world, and consequently the Dispenser of all the gifts, which Jesus procured for us by His death and by His precious Blood.”

Finally, Pope Benedict XV, writing to the Director of the Perpetual Rosary in Italy, recommended that familiar form of prayer, as “addressed to her, through whom it has pleased God that all graces should come to us.” The same Pontiff also granted to the episcopacy of Belgium, and to as many others as requested the favor, the privilege of reciting the Mass and Office of “Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces.”

We have thus the authority of Holy Scripture, the constant tradition of the Church, and the utterances of the Supreme Pontiffs, all on the side of this great prerogative of

our Blessed Lady, which is not assailed perhaps by a single theologian of note either of our day, or in the past, and whose outspoken champions are growing in number from day to day.

As a sort of corollary to what precedes we may-add that, in the actual order of Providence, no supernatural favor is granted to anyone, unless through the concurrence of a threefold will. It must be willed, in the first place, by God Himself, who is the Author of all graces. It must be solicited, in the second place, by Christ, the one Mediator, who obtains what He asks through His own merits, and as a matter of strict justice. In the third place, there must be added the intercession of Mary, whose prayer will never be rejected, because it is God's design to honor her by associating her with her Son in the distribution of His gifts.

There are thus three steps that must be taken in every prayer, and Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical of September 8th, 1894, applying this principle to the Rosary, says: "In the recitation of the Rosary, we pause more readily, so to say, and more at length, on the first of these steps. We repeat the Angelical Salutation, decade after decade, as if to climb with

more assurance the two remaining steps, whereby we go through Christ to God, the Father.

‘Our prayer is imperfect and feeble, it needs a prop to support it, and inspire confidence. Hence we address to Mary the same greeting many times over, entreating her to pray to God for us, and to speak in our name. Our words will find favor and credit with God, if they have her prayers to recommend them. For it is to her that God extends this invitation so full of love: ‘Let thy voice sound in mine ears, for thy voice is sweet?’ ”

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT IS MEANT BY "ALL GRACES"

According to the teaching of the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius X, in his encyclical, *Ad diem illum*, (2 Feb. 1904), Mary, by her union of will with her Divine Son, merited to become "the *Dispenser of all the gifts* which Jesus procured for us by His death and precious Blood." And Leo XIII had previously taught, approving the opinion of St. Bernardine of Sienna, and lending to it the weight of his apostolic authority, that "God *dispenses all His graces* through her." Just how Mary is the dispenser or distributor of God's gifts, we shall see in a future chapter, but a question arises as to what is meant precisely, not by the word *all*, but by the word which it qualifies.

There are some writers, it is true, who hesitate to attribute absolute universality to Mary's actual intervention in the distribution of grace, but, as it would seem, for motives which are far from strong, or which might be urged with equal force against any sort of universality in

her mediation. It seems more in conformity with sound logic to take the texts and arguments in favor of Mary's universal intercession in their fullest breadth and in all their bearing, as positively excluding any limitation or exception.

This, however, does not settle for us the question as to what is comprised in the term *gifts* or *graces*. Pope Pius X, in the encyclical letter just referred to, deduces Mary's universal intervention in the distribution of God's gifts to us, from her spiritual Motherhood. Now Mary is our Mother in order to give us the supernatural life, to nourish and foster that life within us, and to bring us little by little to our full spiritual growth. It is the one purpose of her spiritual Motherhood in our regard, and hence we may not conclude from this relationship in which she stands to us, that she has power to procure for us gifts or favors, which do not in some way or other contribute to our supernatural life.

Does it follow from this that it is useless to apply to her for material favors? Or is it not rather the daily experience of the faithful that Mary does indeed actively interest herself in their temporal affairs? Was it not so at the wedding feast of Cana, when she ob-

tained for the guests at table the miraculous gift of an abundance of wine? And does not Holy Church herself teach us to appeal to God through Mary for bodily health, for rain or sunshine according to our need, and other earthly blessings? What again of the numberless miraculous cures effected through her intercession at Lourdes, and at others of Our Lady's shrines?

But temporal favors must always be prayed for with the proviso that they would, if granted, prove conducive to God's honor and the good of souls. If they have no connection with these, they do not come within the sphere of Mary's influence, and it would be idle to ask her to intervene.

The most precious of God's gifts is grace. As the author of the *Imitation of Christ* says so beautifully, it is "the proper mark of the elect." Earthly riches God bestows often, even lavishly, upon His enemies, but to His friends He gives grace, and the stronger the friendship the greater the grace. To Mary He gave it in such measure that the Angel who announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation, saluted her as "full of grace." For as St Jerome says, "to others it is given by parts, but on Mary the whole fulness of grace was at

once poured out.” And as he says again : “The fulness of all the grace that is in Christ, came upon Mary, though in a different way.”

But grace is twofold, sanctifying or habitual grace, and actual or transient grace. Of these the former is the nobler. It is like a second nature, raising us above ourselves to a share in the divine nature. It is called for that reason the grace *of the adoption as of children*. Actual grace, on the other hand is not a permanent gift, but is offered or actually given to us, only as we need it for the overcoming of temptation, and for the fulfilment of the duties of our state. It consists in light for the mind, and inspiration for the will, impelling it to act, and strengthening and supporting it in the act

Now it is chiefly these actual graces that we have in mind, when we say that all graces come to us through Mary’s hands. Not that we would deny our indebtedness to her for the gift of sanctifying grace itself; rather we owe this to her on more than one account. If she is our Mother, she is so in order to impart to us the life of the spirit, and by her watchful and loving care gradually to effect our complete spiritual formation. But our supernatural life consists in sanctifying grace, and

our growth in this is the measure of the development in us of the life of the soul.

Again, our spiritual birth implies, in the present order, our incorporation with Jesus, with whom henceforth we form but one moral being, receiving from Him, as members from their head, all that appertains to the formation in us of Christ. Mary then, in the very act of consenting to become the Mother of Jesus, consents to become the Mother of all who are to form part of Christ's mystical body. She thus cooperates in our spiritual birth, and as this is effected by sanctifying grace, we are indebted to her for the latter, no less than for the manifold actual or transient graces at any time conferred upon us.

However, in attributing all graces to Mary's actual intervention in our behalf, we make no distinction between the various kinds of grace, regarding them all merely in their common aspect, as supernatural or gratuitous gifts of God. These, we say, without exception, are bestowed upon us through Mary's intercession.

True, the Sacraments of the Church infallibly produce habitual grace in the souls of those who receive them with the requisite dispositions, and they are the divinely appointed

means for communicating grace to men. So that Mary's actual intervention might here appear superfluous. On the other hand, the impulse itself to receive the Sacraments is a gratuitous gift of God, and hence like all others comes through Mary, while the preparation for receiving the Sacraments, as well as their worthy reception, implies often a series of graces, of which Mary is the universal intermediary. Or it may be question, say, of the baptism of infants, incapable of disposing themselves, or of like cases, when not the recipient himself, but some one else has secured for him the benefit of the Sacrament. Here too, there was need of various actual graces to incite the responsible agent to do his part, and to aid him in the carrying out of his pious purpose, and these are the direct fruit of *Mary's* prayer.

Again every salutary act merits, in the strict sense of the word, an increase of sanctifying grace, for one who is already in the state of grace, and it might be asked what room is left for Mary's intervention, when, in the nature of the case, said increase is already assured. But the answer is clear: the salutary act itself presupposes for its performance certain actual supernatural helps, and these are

not accorded except through the intercession of Mary.

In the foregoing paragraphs our aim has been to show that from the point of view of the benefits which it procures for us, there is no solid motive for limiting the universality of Mary's mediation, which we suppose to have been established in the preceding chapters. In that which immediately follows we shall inquire how far it is universal with respect to the persons benefited.

CHAPTER XV

TO WHOM DOES MARY'S MEDIATION EXTEND?

Our Divine Lord is the Redeemer of all mankind. By His death on the Cross He paid the debt of the whole human race, and no one is reconciled to the Father unless through Him. The atonement which He offered for the sins of men was accepted by God in advance, in favor of those who lived and died before the coming of their Deliverer, and hence before the actual payment of their ransom. But in the whole work of the redemption Christ has associated His Blessed Mother with Himself *arctissimo et indissolubili vinculo*, that is to say, by a close and indissoluble bond. The redemption has not been accomplished without her cooperation, and they who are its beneficiaries, whether they lived before the birth of Christ or since, are all indebted to Mary for this cooperation, which has made her the Mother of all the redeemed.

When however we affirm that Mary is the

dispenser of all God's graces, we go still farther, and say that she actually intervenes with Him in order to obtain for us, by her prayers, every gift, without exception, that is conferred upon us through the merits of Christ for the salvation of our souls. Here a new question presents itself. Can we understand this universal intercession of Mary as embracing, in its full extent, even those who lived and died during the long period of expectation, which preceded the coming of the Messiah? Would this not imply that in her lifetime, Mary knew every individual soul of all the ages past, and was cognizant at the same time of all their needs, and was able thus to ask for each in particular all the helps which it was in the providence of God to bestow upon it?

Certainly, our Divine Saviour, even as Man, knew every human soul, and all the wants of each, and every one, and every grace that His sacred Passion was to win for them. But we have by no means the same assurance in the case of our Blessed Lady. It may be that at certain moments in her life God made them known to her, and that she was thus enabled to ask for all men individually the graces that were specially adapted to their

needs. It is an opinion for which some weighty authorities might be quoted, but still it is only an opinion, and one may maintain the universal intercession of Mary without subscribing to it. For Mary, by uniting her prayer with that of her Divine Son, as she undoubtedly did, asked and obtained, without knowing them distinctly, each and every grace bestowed in ages past through the passion and death of Christ. As Father de la Broise observes, if I ask of a rich man assistance for the inhabitants of a devastated town to be distributed according to the needs of each, I am really the moral cause of the aid apportioned to each individual, even though I know not, and may never know the individual or his wants.

Nor would this “general and implicit, but indistinct, knowledge of the graces obtained,” to quote from the same pious and learned author, “reduce Our Lady’s mediation to the rank of a mediation merely remote. The head of a state, who, by his signature, grants all the favors comprised in a list, bestows them on the various individuals immediately and proximately, even if he has not read their names. His collective will reaches each term of the collection.”

As for ourselves, and all who have lived since the apostolic age, the universal intercession of Mary, that is to say, her actual intervention in every grace bestowed upon us, presents less serious difficulties. For if we were not known distinctly by our Blessed Lady during her lifetime here on earth, as we may well have been by special revelation, we certainly are known to her at present, and have been so ever since her glorious Assumption into heaven. Mary, as the universal Mediatrix of the human race, knows all that concerns the work of salvation, in which the divine will has inseparably associated her with her Son. Besides the knowledge then of every individual soul, she must also know all that would serve to advance or retard it on the way to heaven. She is thus able to intervene in our behalf at every moment, not only with the deepest and tenderest affection, but also with the clearest intelligence of our needs.

No other Saint exerts such universal influence in the affair of our salvation, as Mary, the Mother of God. No wonder then if no other has a like understanding of our miseries, or is in a position to render us on all occasions timely and efficacious assistance. We may indeed address ourselves to the Saints for

favours of various kinds, but our prayer must always pass through Mary's hands if it is to reach the throne of grace, and draw down the divine blessing upon us. Does it not seem then that, just as it must enhance the value of our prayers to make explicit mention, when we pray, of Him whose merits are the source of all our hope, so too, our petitions will surely be more promptly and more fully granted, if in making them we are not unmindful of her without whose intervention no prayer is accepted by her Son?

CHAPTER XVI

THE CHURCH AT MARY'S FEET

In his account of the extraordinary vision granted to him on the island of Patmos, the Beloved Disciple tells us that "a great sign appeared in heaven: a Woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Apoc. 12. 1). If in the Woman here described we see, as undoubtedly we should see, a striking image of the Virgin Mother of God, the attitude of the Church toward Mary is admirably expressed by the symbol of the moon under the Woman's feet.

The attitude is that of a suppliant—a suppliant who is forever entreating Mary to use her good offices in favor of her children ; forever imploring her to interpose in their behalf with Him who has enveloped her with His light and His glory, and has poured out upon her the whole fulness of His grace. And is it not, in fact, in a spirit of loving trustfulness

that the faithful have recourse to Mary on all occasions? Is it not to her that they commend their hopes and their fears alike? Are not their eyes upraised to her in sorrow and in joy?

No prayer is so often on their lips as the *Hail Mary*, or *Angelical Salutation*. The little ones of the fold are taught from the first to join its recitation to that of the best of all prayers, and from the tenderest age, to ask Mary's intercession for them during life and at the hour of death. It is not long before they learn to recite the Rosary, and to carry about with them their beads, as a cherished badge of devotion to the Queen of Heaven, and a special pledge of her loving protection. In all their needs, her children, young and old, are wont to invoke her, and, as they proclaim in one of their favorite prayers, they are quite persuaded that no one ever sought her intercession in vain

Many is the triumph that has been won, in times of gravest danger for the Church and for Christendom, by the recitation in common of the Rosary, that efficacious form of prayer, which must indeed be dear to Mary, as reminding her so insistently of the message brought to her from Heaven by an Angel, and

of the unexampled dignity, which was then conferred upon her.

But it is in our day that, more than ever before, a combined and persevering effort has been made to secure the peace and prosperity of Holy Church, amid calamitous times, through a united appeal to our Blessed Lady from her children, gathered together before the tabernacle, in all the churches and chapels of the Catholic world, and united with one another in the recitation of the beads.

It is many years since the Holy Father, Leo XIII, in the exercise of his supreme authority as the visible Head of the Church, commanded that the entire month of October should be thus sanctified by so remarkable a display of confidence in the power of Mary's intercession, and there can be no doubt, in the mind of one who contrasts the present outlook for the Church with the conditions so widely prevalent some forty or fifty years ago, that the confidence thus shown in the Virgin Mother has in no way been misplaced.

But apart from any such public devotion of the faithful, as well as from any particular enactment of this or that supreme Pontiff, we have in the sacred liturgy itself, which is the official prayer of the Church, most convincing

evidence of the place accorded by her to Mary, as standing ever between the Fount of all grace and mercy and the prayers of our afflicted race. The yearly calendar shows a far larger number of Feast-days solemnized in honor of Mary, than of any other of the Blessed. They occur each month, and within one and the same month there are sometimes several, the Mass and Office on such occasions being specially adapted to bring out and to emphasize the wonderful prerogatives of Mary, and the confidence of her children in her all-powerful intercession.

But besides her own peculiar Festivals, Mar/s aid is invoked in four distinct places in every Mass that is said throughout the year, and while a few of the greater Saints are mentioned with her, her name is always first, and its introduction is accompanied with a more marked solemnity.

Similarly, in the Divine Office, both at the beginning and at the end, as well as before each separate hour, the *Hail Mary* is recited along with the *Our Father*, even on the last three days of Holy Week, when the invocation of the other Saints is suppressed. Twice also, once at the end of Lauds, and again at the conclusion of the Office for the day, when

they who chant the canonical hours are about to withdraw from the choir, an antiphon is sung in honor of our Blessed Lady, as if to place under her special patronage the divine praises that have just been recited, and the manifold petitions that have been addressed to the throne of grace.

Furthermore, since an early period in the Pontificate of Pope Leo XIII, and by direction of that great Pontiff, so devoted to Mary, the priest, after every low Mass, must recite alternately with his people three *Hail Marys*, together with the antiphon, *Hail, Holy Queen*—surely a significant fact, as bearing witness to the urgent desire of the Church that her children should always and everywhere seek to combine the mediation of Mary with that of her Divine Son. Nothing indeed can appeal to God with anything comparable to the force and efficacy of the adorable sacrifice of the Mass, and yet, as though it lacked something of its full persuasive power, we are bidden to ask Mary to supplement the pleadings of the Precious Blood by her own earnest prayers in our behalf.

The practice then of the Church being the expression of her faith, it would seem to follow that, independently of the three degrees

by which it must pass—through Mary to Jesus, and through Jesus to the Father—there is no intercessory prayer available for throwing open the treasures of divine grace. Hence the Church is ever prostrate at the feet of Mary, and her children, taught by her the value and the necessity of Mary's mediation, bow down in never-ceasing supplication before her throne.

Other Saints have been set, so to say, on the path of certain definite classes of heavenly gifts, whence their intercession is happily invoked for this or that particular sort of favor; but there is no possible species of gift, no grace of whatever kind, but must pass through Mary's hands, if it is to reach the earth, and bring aid or comfort to some human heart. We address ourselves then, now to one, now to another of God's elect in Heaven, desiring them to use their influence in our behalf, in order to procure for us this or that coveted grace, but to Mary we turn at every moment, and on every occasion, persuaded that whatever she asks she obtains, and that she is withal no whit less gracious than she is wondrously rich and mighty.

In the great cathedrals that were erected to the honor of God, in Catholic times, our

forefathers loved to dedicate one of the gates to Mary, or at least to place her image near that of her Divine Son in the decoration of the main portal. Often too, within the sacred edifice, the statue of Our Lady was set up close to the spot where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, or even served as a support for it, and, in more recent times, it has become customary in many cathedrals to reserve the Holy Eucharist at the altar in the Lady chapel.

What, I ask, does all this symbolize? What is the mind of Holy Church which finds such apt expression in these outward practices? Surely, the dominant idea is that of Mary, as associated with Jesus, when He calls souls to the faith and to the Church, and when with bread from heaven He nourishes in them the spiritual life. And if, in the representations of Christian art, quite generally, we constantly find Jesus and Mary united together, it surely is because in Christian thought they are not separated, and because Mary is ever the Mediatrix through whom we most readily gain access to Jesus, and apart from whom there is no approach to Him. That is why the true children of Holy Church are unceasingly at Mary's feet, while from her hands the rich treasures of grace are ever descending upon

them —treasures which her Divine Son has amassed for them by His Passion and death, but of which He has made her the universal dispenser.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHAT MARY'S MEDIATION CONSISTS

When we affirm that Our Lord has deposited all His treasures in Mary's hands, for her to distribute them at pleasure; or that every heavenly grace that comes to us, must pass through Mary's hands, it would be possible to give too literal an interpretation to our words. It is not with grace as with physical wealth, or material resources. An earthly potentate might indeed make his mother the direct dispenser of the royal alms, commissioning her to handle what she distributes, but such a process would scarcely be intelligible on the part of a pure creature in the matter of divine grace. To distribute it, as though from hand to hand, would involve producing it, an effect which is beyond the province of any creature; grace, whether habitual or actual, being purely supernatural, and, as such, requiring God for its author.

If then the causality which we ascribe to Mary in respect of grace is not physical, it

must be moral. It is by her prayer that she obtains for us all manner of graces. Her intercession is all-powerful. It would avail to offset the pleading in a contrary sense, were such a thing conceivable, of the whole multitude of the Blessed. Mary's slightest wish is law, because her Son has made her the dispenser of all His treasures.

It is in view of the merits of Christ that His heavenly Father is willing to be reconciled to mankind, to forget our sins, to pour out His grace abundantly upon us. It is when He beholds the Divine Victim, that has been slain for us, and sees His wounds, and hears the voice of His Blood crying out for pardon for His brethren, that the heart of the Father is moved, that the gates of His mercy are unlocked, and that the streams of grace flow downward to bathe the earth, and render fruitful the barren hearts of men.

But the Lamb of God, immolated on Calvary, was offered up through Mary's hands. He did indeed offer Himself as the principal agent, even as in Holy Mass it is He who is High Priest no less than Victim. But as in the Eucharistic Sacrifice He is pleased to use as His instrument a mortal man, so too it was His will, that, as He hung upon the Cross, His

Mother should be present at His side, that by the union of her will with His, she might co-operate with Him in His saving oblation.

And so, even now in Heaven, while no gift is bestowed on us by God except in virtue of the Passion and death of His Divine Son, the Precious Blood, the sacred wounds of Jesus, must be presented to God by Mary, and, apart from her cooperation, no grace descends to earth, no dew from Heaven refreshes the human heart, no bounteous rain, dropping on it from above, makes it fruitful in salutary works.

In this the mediation of our Blessed Lady mainly consists. She does, indeed, intercede for us in our varied needs, and her own extraordinary grace and merit, her own wondrous prerogatives, give to her prayer an irresistible force and efficacy. She is the Mother of Jesus, she is the glorious daughter of the Most High, she is the cherished Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and as such she can never meet with a rebuff. Her slightest wish carries with it a resistless appeal, to which the Lord of all things can never be insensible. Yet more powerfully still than even Mary's exalted merit does the Precious Blood of Jesus plead for us, and whatever power her prayers possess to ren-

der God propitious to the sinner, all comes to them from the Passion of Christ, her Son.

On the other hand, it has been the will of God, that from first to last Jesus, as the Victim of atonement for our sins, should be presented to Him by Mary. It was so when the Virgin Mother gave her consent to the divine plan of the Redemption, as declared to her by the Angel at Nazareth. It was so when she ratified her consent at the birth of the Saviour at Bethlehem, at His Presentation in the temple at Jerusalem, and finally as she stood beneath the Cross on Calvary.

And now in Heaven, when the fruits of the Redemption are applied to our souls, and the graces won for us by the Passion of Our Saviour, are distributed to the redeemed, Mary “united to Him by a close and indissoluble bond/’ still continues her part as Mediatrix in the work of our salvation, by offering to the Father the merits of Christ, uniting meanwhile her prayers, and, in a secondary sense, her merits, to the intercession of her Divine Son.

CHAPTER XVni

DEGREE OF CERTAINTY OF WHAT PRECEDES

The name of *second Eve*, so universally accorded to Mary from the earliest times, implies on her part a cooperation in the restoration of mankind parallel to that of Eve in the fall. If then we speak in general terms of Mary's cooperation in the work of the Redemption, it is undoubtedly a truth so closely connected with faith, that it might without difficulty be defined, were anyone disposed to deny it

The same should be said of the two parts into which that cooperation may be divided, the first embracing Mary's concurrence in the work of the Redeemer from the Incarnation to the close of her earthly days; the other her share in that same work since her Assumption into Heaven. And surely the faith of the Church is no less explicit with reference to the motherly solicitude, with which Mary watches over her children now from her ex-

alted throne above, than to the role she played on earth by her consent to the Incarnation, and the constant union of her will with that of our Divine Saviour. The latter has to do with the *acquisition of grace*, the former with its *distribution*.

As for the terms *Mediatrix* and *mediation*, they are so commonly applied to Mary by the Fathers and by Catholic divines, that they evidently express the mind of Holy Church, and are susceptible of dogmatic definition. Besides, they do not really differ in sense from *cooperatrix* and *cooperation*, although the latter are more readily understood of the part which Mary played in the work of Our Lord here on earth, whereby He paid the penalty of our sins, and reconciled us with the Father, while the former are more commonly referred to Mary's intercession in our behalf with a view to the distribution of the graces won for us by Christ.

Mary's *universal mediation* is taken to mean her universal intercession, which is obviously equivalent—though a distinction has been made—to her *actual* intervention in *all* the graces conferred on man in view of the merits of her Son, and this it is sought to have the Church define.

As yet it is only a pious belief, but one which is gaining in favor from day to day, and which perhaps not a single Catholic author now rejects. The more it is studied, the more solid the foundations upon which it is seen to rest, and the more conformable it appears to Catholic tradition from the outset. But what perhaps more than anything else gives weight to this belief, and seems decidedly to raise it to a loftier plane than that of mere opinion, is the fact that the Sovereign Pontiffs themselves, Leo XIII and Pius X in particular, have, in documents addressed to the whole world, proclaimed Mary's *universal mediation* again and again, declaring with much insistence that no grace comes to mankind without passing through her hands.

There has been as yet no formal definition of the belief as a dogma of the faith, but surely its emphatic and repeated assertion by the Vicar of Christ is proof enough that it is no new or strange doctrine, no mere pious exaggeration, but is thoroughly in harmony with the teaching of the Church and worthy of being accepted by the faithful with all reverence and submission. In fact, it is not easy to see how, in the face of such clear and unequivocal affirmation, one could reject the

belief in question without a certain degree of temerity.

Pope Pius X, in his Encyclical of 2nd February, 1904, already quoted, deduces the actual intervention of Mary in all the graces bestowed by God on men from her spiritual maternity. The latter he proves from the purpose Our Lord had in view in taking to Himself our human flesh. It was that He might be the Saviour and Deliverer of our race, and, as such, the Head of that spiritual and mystical body, which was to be made up of all those who should believe in Him. And hence Mary, who became His Mother not merely that the Son of God might be made man, but also that He might be the Deliverer of mankind, became at one and the same time the natural Mother of Christ and our spiritual Mother. *

But if Mary is our Mother, she must discharge towards us the functions of motherhood. She must not only intervene to confer on us the supernatural life of sanctifying grace, through which we are incorporated with Christ, and made members of His mystical body, but she must also nourish that life within us; hence she must likewise have part in those actual graces, which God does not

bestow save with a view to the acquisition, preservation and increase of sanctifying grace.

As for the spiritual Motherhood itself, thus authoritatively attributed to Mary by the Holy Father, we may assert, without fear of contradiction, that it is theologically certain. The learned Servite theologian, Alexis M. Lepicier, recently elevated to the archiépiscopeal dignity, in his treatise on the Blessed Virgin, pronounces it a "Catholic truth, most closely connected with the faith" (*veritas Catholica, ad fidem proxime pertinens*), and the *Civiltà Cattolica*, quoting his verdict with evident approval, adds: "To deny it then would not only be rash; it would savor even of heresy. For this truth, though never expressly defined, is none the less universally enshrined in the heart, even as it is ever on the lips, of the Christian people."

CHAPTER XIX

DEVOTION TO OUR LADY

There can be no doubt that the Motherhood of Grace, attributed to Mary, is a most important factor in giving to the Christian religion much of its charm and attractiveness. It imparts to our relations with our Divine Saviour a certain tenderness which would be lacking, were not the Mother of Jesus our Mother also. It is not quite the same thing to have been redeemed by Jesus with her co-operation, as it would have been to have been saved by Jesus alone. Jesus Himself would not be the same to us, had He not chosen to have a Mother, or had He not associated her with Himself as Mother of Grace at every stage of His work. The motherly solicitude of our Blessed Lady, which is everywhere present, gives a human touch, that inspires confidence even in the most conscience-stricken, and the most timid. And God, who knows the human heart, has provided here as elsewhere, in all things accommodating Him-

self to our needs, and seeking everywhere our greatest advantage.

We have from our infancy regarded Mary as our Mother, and have been accustomed to turn to her in all our gravest dangers. We know that she is prompt to succor those who invoke her, and are sure that her prayer cannot possibly suffer a refusal.

At the same time, we have not perhaps fully realized that, even when not invoked, she is the Mediatrix apart from whom no grace descends to earth to refresh our souls, and to quicken within us the life of the spirit. We may call upon others of the Blessed to aid and comfort us, but even so, our prayers must be presented at the throne of grace by Mary. We may, if we will, go directly to God, we may address our appeal immediately to our Divine Lord, but even thus, if Mary's mediation is universal, our petition in order to be granted, must pass through Mary's hands; she must first add to it the weight of her all-powerful intercession.

On the other hand, when we have recourse directly to Mary, we conform to the plan of divine Providence, and to the order which God Himself has established. For Mary is, in reality, the dispenser of all His graces, and we

practically affirm that it is so, as often as we appeal to her with humble confidence. Our Lord, who loves His Blessed Mother far beyond all other creatures, cannot fail to be pleased, when, by our recourse to her in our needs, we recognize her association with Him in the distribution of all His gifts.

Mary's love for each and everyone of us is that of the wisest and tenderest Mother. She is indeed our Mother, and the best of mothers. She knows each one of us individually, together with all that concerns us. —Of this there can be no question now that she beholds all things in the beatific vision; whether she may not have done so during her lifetime here on earth is a matter for theologians to discuss. —And cherishing us, as she does, with the deepest and fondest love, she is most desirous of including us within the range of her choicest benefactions. Every grace that is accorded to us, even without our praying for it, is due to her prayer. Why then should we not eagerly avail ourselves of her power and influence, when she is so ready to assist us?

God hears, no doubt, the prayers of his other elect, when they entreat Him in our behalf, and He does unquestionably impel the faithful at particular periods to invoke the

intercession of this or that Saint, whom for His own wise reasons He would specially glorify, but what is true of particular Saints at particular epochs, and with reference to certain classes of gifts, is true of Mary at all times and with respect to every sort of grace. God wishes always to honor her, and to procure her honor from all His creatures.

It would be a serious mistake, and one that could not fail to result in spiritual loss, to allow oneself to be so taken up with practices of devotion towards this or that Saint, to whom one is naturally or artificially attracted, as to be lukewarm towards the really great and primary devotions of the Church. Among these is undoubtedly devotion to the ever Blessed Mother of God, Mother of grace, and our Mediatrix. For those who cherish and practice this devotion, it is a strong safeguard against the wiles of the old serpent, a source of chaste and holy living amid incentives to evil-doing, an assured hope at the hour of death, and a pledge of eternal salvation.