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092 - Ubi Primum, Deiparae Virginis Mariae, Inter Complures

Pius IX

Pius XII

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MARIAN LIBRARY STUDIES

POPE PIUS IX — UBI PRIMUM
POPE PIUS XII — DEIPARAE VIRGINIS MARIAE
POPE PIUS XII — INTER COMPLURES

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About the Documents

At first glance it might seem that there is little relationship between the two encyclical letters and the papal address selected for this study; however, a diligent investigation of the contents of the first two documents would certainly reveal that the Popes are applying the very principles for the study of Mariology so magnificently expounded in the last document.

We are grateful to the editors of *The Pope Speaks* and the translator Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., S.T.D., Assistant Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of America and member of the International Marian Academy, for permission to include the three papal documents in our present study. The commentary which follows is from Father Carroll.

*Pope Pius IX* — *"Ubi Primum"* (February 2, 1849)

Elected pope in 1846, Pius IX was forced by a revolution to flee to Gaeta in 1848. His characteristic reaction to these troubles was to set in motion the events that would culminate in the definition of the Immaculate Conception. The letter, *Ubi primum*, February 2, 1849, was sent to the bishops of the world. The pope acknowledges the many petitions the Holy See has received about the Immaculate Conception, and states his personal devotion to Mary Immaculate. Then he poses two questions: (1) what do you and your clergy and people think about the Immaculate Conception? and (2) is it your desire, and that of your priests and flocks, that this truth be defined by the Holy See. *Ubi primum* and the hundreds of replies that followed it served as a sort of ecumenical council by mail.

*Pope Pius XII* — *"Deiparae Virginis Mariae"* (May 1, 1946)

As Pius IX had done in 1849 by the letter *Ubi primum*, preparing for the definition of the Immaculate Conception, so in 1946 Pius XII addressed to the entire episcopate this encyclical urging common prayer and seeking the answers of the bishops to two questions: (1) can the Assumption be defined as a truth revealed by God? and (2) is such a definition opportune? The collection of petitions mentioned in the en-

(Continued on inside back cover.)

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The Encyclical Letter

"UBI PRIMUM"

Pope Pius IX

February 2, 1849

When, by no merit of Ours, but by the hidden designs of Divine Providence, We were first raised to the sublime chair of the Prince of the Apostles, and undertook the government of the universal Church, We experienced the liveliest consolation on discovering how wonderfully, under the pontificate of Our predecessor Gregory XVI, of blessed memory, the whole Catholic world was inspired with the ardent wish that the Holy See, by a solemn decision, should declare that the holy Mother of God and the most loving Mother of all of us, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, was conceived without original sin.

This devout desire is clearly and unmistakably attested and manifested by the incessant petitions presented to Our predecessor as well as to Ourselves, in which illustrious prelates, esteemed canonical chapters, and religious congregations, including the renowned Order of Preachers, have outdone one another in seeking permission to add, and to use openly and publicly, in the holy Liturgy, and particularly in the preface of the Mass of the Conception of the most Blessed Virgin, the word Immaculate. To these entreaties Our predecessor and Ourselves have most cheerfully assented.

Petitions for definition

Moreover, venerable brethren, a great many among you have not ceased to address to Our predecessor and to Us letters expressive of your repeated requests and redoubled desires, urging Us to define as a doctrine of the Catholic Church that the conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was altogether immaculate and totally free from all stain of original sin. Nor have there been wanting in our time men distinguished for their genius, virtue, piety, and doctrine, who, by their learned and carefully worked-out writings, have shed so clear a light upon this subject and this pious belief, as to create surprise among many that the Church and the Apostolic See have not yet decreed to the most Blessed Virgin that honor which the ordinary religious sense of the faithful so eagerly desires to see given her by the solemn judgment and authority of the Church and the Holy See.

Pontiff’s love of our Lady

To Us these wishes have been most welcome and full of consolation;
for, from Our earliest years, nothing has been more dear or more precious to Our heart than to honor the most Blessed Virgin Mary from Our inmost soul, with a loyal and wholehearted devotion, and to do all that seemed to Us calculated to promote her glory and praise and extend devotion to her. Hence, from the very commencement of Our supreme pontificate, We have most joyfully bestowed serious care and thought to this matter of such extreme importance, and have not ceased to offer up to almighty God our humble and fervent prayers that He would enlighten Our spirit with His celestial light, that We may know what We should do in this matter.

We rely, above all, on the hope that the Most Blessed Virgin, who "has been raised by her exalted merits above all the choirs of angels, even to the throne of God" (St. Gregory the Great), who has crushed under her feet the head of the old serpent, and who, "placed between Christ and the Church" (St. Bernard), ever lovable and full of grace, has rescued the Christian people from the greatest calamities of every kind, from the snares and assaults of all their enemies, and saved them from destruction, will look with the mercy of her mother's heart on our sad misfortunes, our bitter trials, labors, and necessities, and, by her immediate and powerful influence with God, will avert the scourge of the divine wrath which afflicts us for our sins, and calm and dissipate the violent storm of evil which everywhere, to Our incredible grief, agitates the Church, and turn Our sorrow into joy. For you all know, venerable brethren, that the whole ground of Our confidence is in the most Blessed Virgin, since God has established in Mary the plenitude of all good; to that, if we have any hope, if we have any grace, if there is any salvation for us, we know that through her we have received it; because such is the will of Him who wishes that all should come to us through Mary.

For these reasons We have appointed a number of priests, eminent for their piety and their knowledge of theology, and some of our venerable brethren, cardinals of our Holy Roman Church, distinguished for their virtue, their religion, their wisdom, their prudence, and their knowledge of divine things, to carefully examine this important subject in all its aspects, with prudence and wisdom, and then submit to Us without delay the result of their deliberations. In thus acting We have thought to follow in the footsteps of Our predecessors, and to emulate their example.

Two questions put to the entire Church

Wherefore, venerable brethren, We address to you this letter, earnestly calling upon your piety and episcopal solicitude, and urging you, each one in his own diocese, and according to his own judgment and discretion, to order public prayers to be said that the merciful Father of lights
may shed upon Us the brightness of His divine Spirit, and fill Us with His heavenly inspirations, so that in a matter of such importance We may be enabled to form that judgment which will redound to the greater glory of His holy name, the praise of the most Blessed Virgin, and the advantage of the Church militant. It is Our earnest wish that you make known to Us as soon as possible what devotion your clergy and faithful people entertain towards the Conception of the Immaculate Virgin, and what may be their disposition to see this matter defined by the Holy See. Above all, We wish to learn, venerable brethren, what you yourselves, in your eminent wisdom, may think and desire in reference to this subject.

And, as We have already granted to the Roman clergy the privilege of reciting a special office of the Conception of the most Blessed Virgin, recently composed and published, in place of that which is in the common breviary, We extend to you by this letter, venerable brethren, the faculty of permitting, if you think fit, all the clergy of your dioceses to recite freely and lawfully the same canonical hours of the Conception of the most Blessed Virgin that are in use among the Roman clergy, without your requesting this faculty either from Us or from Our Sacred Congregation of Rites.

We have no doubts whatever, venerable brethren, that your strong love for the most Blessed Virgin Mary will lead you to comply carefully and zealously with Our wishes, and that you will hasten to transmit to Us the answers We request from you. In the meantime, receive as a pledge of all heavenly favors, and as a testimonial of Our friendship for you, the apostolic benediction, which We give you with all Our heart, venerable brethren, as well as to all the clergy and faithful under your charge.

Given at Gaeta, February 2, 1849, in the third year of Our pontificate.
The Encyclical Letter

"DEIPARAE VIRGINIS MARIAE"

Pope Pius XII

May 1, 1946

Since every instance of help asked and obtained from the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, enkindles in the hearts of the faithful a constantly increasing devotion; and since love, if truly deep and sincere, is ingenious in inventing new ways of expressing affection, Christians have competed with one another, in the course of the centuries, to show their love for Mary. It is Our conviction that this is the reason why this Apostolic See has been receiving for some time a large number of letters (a collection of these letters, received over the period from 1849 to 1940, was recently published in two volumes, complete with explanatory notes), from Cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, priests, religious men and women, organizations, universities, and countless private individuals; all of these letters expressed a desire to see the corporeal Assumption into heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary proclaimed and defined as a dogma of faith by solemn decree. And, as everyone knows, nearly 200 of the Fathers at the Vatican Council strongly expressed the same desire.

The Pope's interest in the Assumption petitions

To Us, who are charged with defending and promoting the Kingdom of Christ, is also entrusted the task of doing whatever is helpful to this cause, while relentlessly and watchfully warding off what is detrimental to it. Therefore, from the very beginning of Our pontificate, We have been aware of the necessity for carefully weighing and investigating the question of whether it would be right, fitting, and opportune for Us to use Our power to satisfy the above mentioned petitions. In connection with this matter, We neither failed in the past, nor are We failing now, to fervently entreat God to inspire Us and disclose to Us the counsel of His eternally adorable will.

Two questions put to the bishops

In order to obtain the help of heavenly light in this matter, We ask you, venerable brethren, to try to equal Us by adding your prayers to Ours. While We exhort you with fatherly heart to do this, at the same time, following the method and procedure of Our predecessors, especially of Pius IX when he was on the point of defining the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, We request you to let Us
know the feeling about the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, as found in the clergy and people under your jurisdiction, each according to his own faith and piety. In particular, We desire most ardently to know whether you, venerable brethren, in your outstanding wisdom and prudence, are of the opinion that the bodily Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith, and whether you, together with your clergy and people, desire the definition.

We shall be most grateful for your prompt response, and We entreat an abundance of divine favors, and the favorable assistance of the heavenly Virgin, upon you, venerable brothers, and upon yours, while We most lovingly impart Our Apostolic Blessing in the Lord, as a token of Our fatherly affection, to you and to the flocks committed to your care.


"INTER COMPLURES"

Pope Pius XII

October 24, 1954

It was Our expectation when We proclaimed the celebration of this Marian Year throughout the world that it would produce many salutary and religious fruits. It was Our special hope that among these fruits the year would see a more profound study of the unique dignity of the Mother of God, of her glorious functions and privileges and a clearer presentation of these to the Christian people. Hence it was with great pleasure that We learned of the plan to convoke a Mariological Congress here in Rome toward the end of the Marian Year. We not only approved this project from the start, but We also showed it special favor and endorsed it with Our blessing.

You have come, beloved children, from all parts of the Catholic world to Rome so that, near the tomb of the Prince of Apostles and under the auspices of him to whom the words "Strengthen thy Brethren"1 were
addressed, you could pursue your expert and learned discussions on the honor, grace, and power of this great Virgin and Mother—all in accordance with the norms of sacred doctrine. And now, at the opening of this solemn convocation, We are very pleased to greet this most distinguished gathering of learned men, and to speak to you as a father.

**Solid foundation necessary**

Since Mariology is included in the theological studies, it must first of all be based upon the solid foundations of theological doctrine. The more profound the investigation, and the more accurately the truths of Mariology are compared and linked up with each other and with other truths of sacred theology, the more necessary is this solid foundation. This was the method which began to be used with praiseworthy zeal after the solemn definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Our predecessor, Pius IX, and which in our own times has produced ever increasing good results.

Studies such as these are not always easy and obvious, since in pursuing them and in perfecting them what are called "positive" and "speculative" subjects are both required, each of which is governed by its own standards and laws. And the work of research in matters of Mariology will be all the safer and more rewarding the more we keep before our eyes the truth that "in matters of faith and morals the immediate and universal standard of truth for every theologian" is, as We have said, the Church's sacred teaching authority. For, as We explained in the encyclical letter *Humani generis*, God has given this sacred teaching authority to His Church "to clarify and to explain things that are contained only in an obscure and, as it were, implicit way in the deposit of faith." The Divine Redeemer has entrusted this deposit, to be explained and interpreted in an authentic way, to the Church's teaching authority alone. Under the command and leadership of the Church the theologian is assigned the great duty of investigating this deposit thoroughly, of examining well and explaining the nature and interrelations of the individual truths according to the norms of sacred doctrine.

**Scripture and tradition**

In doing this work, the two sources of Catholic doctrine, the Scriptures and Tradition, must be carefully considered. In the books of both Old and New Testaments, the Sacred Scriptures tell us many glorious things about the Blessed Virgin. In fact, her magnificent offices and gifts, namely her virginal motherhood and unspotted holiness, are expressly asserted therein. The description of the Virgin presented there in outline appears in such living colors that it almost constitutes a portrait. But the man who considers it possible to define adequately and to
explain correctly the Blessed Virgin's great dignity and sublimity from
the Sacred Scriptures alone, or who thinks that even the Sacred Scrip-
tures can be explained properly without taking Catholic Tradition and
the sacred teaching authority sufficiently into account, is very far from
the truth. On another occasion, We said that "what is called positive
theology cannot be considered as completely equivalent to historical
science,\textsuperscript{5} and this certainly applies here.

\textit{Church's life and worship}

It is likewise wrong to neglect or to ignore the sacred teaching author-
ity and the Church's life and worship, as manifested over the course of
the centuries, when investigating or explaining the documents of tra-
dition. Sometimes individual documents of antiquity when considered
only by themselves, give little enlightenment. But when put together
and compared with the Church's liturgical life, with the faith, devotion,
and piety of the Christian people — which the same teaching authority
sustains and directs — they become magnificent testimonies for Catholic
truth. Indeed the Church, throughout the centuries of its life, not only
in teaching and defining the faith, but also in its worship and in the
Catholic people's exercises of piety and devotion, is ruled and guarded
by the Holy Spirit and "is infallibly directed to the knowledge of re-
vealed truths\textsuperscript{6} by the same Spirit. Hence the students of Mariology,
when they are investigating and evaluating the testimonies and docu-
ments of ages past and of our own period, must, by all means, keep in
mind that perpetual and ever-effective guidance of the Holy Spirit, so
that they may rightly examine and express the meaning and the im-
portance of what has been said and done.

\textit{Mary's great dignity and its source}

If these standards are strictly observed, Mariology will make genuine
and permanent progress in inquiring ever more profoundly into the
Blessed Virgin's role and dignity. And thus this study will advance
along the straight road of moderation that by-passes all falsification and
exaggeration of truth, that shuns as well the path trod by those who are
troubled by a groundless fear of attributing too much to the Blessed
Virgin, or by an equally vain fear that, as they occasionally phrase it, to
praise and invoke His Mother is somehow to take away something of the
honor and trust due the divine Redeemer.

The truth is that the Blessed Mother of God, as a descendant of Adam,
has no privilege of grace which she does not owe to her Son, the Re-
deemer of the human race. Consequently, when We admire the gifts of
the Mother, and praise them as they deserve, We are admiring and
praising the divinity, the goodness, the love, and the power of her Son.
Whatever We may do to praise the Mother upon whom He has showered so many graces will never displease the Son. Those gifts which the Son has bestowed upon the Mother are so great as to surpass by far the graces of all men and angels, since there can never be any dignity to surpass or to equal that of the divine motherhood. Mary, as the Angelic Doctor says, has a certain infinite dignity from the infinite good that is God by the very fact that she is the Mother of God. Although it is true that, like ourselves, the Blessed Virgin is a member of the Church, still it is no less true that she is an entirely unique member of Christ's Mystical Body.

Therefore, We ardently desire, Beloved Sons, that, keeping these norms in mind, you take up the matters you are going to deal with in your sessions and discuss and debate them with erudition, learning, expertness, and piety. It is the desire of everyone that your united efforts may bring about a tremendous increase in the praises rendered Mary, God’s Mother and ours, and in the honor paid the divine Redeemer who has adorned her with such great graces and gifts.

And since human labor and diligence can accomplish nothing unless God favors and advances the work, We also add Our prayers that He may bless you with the light of His wisdom and the protection of His grace. With this prayer, and in token of Our benevolence, We grant each one of you, cordially in the Lord, the Apostolic Benediction.

NOTES

3. Ibid., p. 569.
7. See Summa Theol., (p. I, q. 25, a. 6, ad. 4.)

The original Latin text of this document is available in AAS 46 (1954) 677-80. The above English translation is adapted from the translation in The Pope Speaks Magazine (1954) v. 1, no. 4, pp. 343-6.

Pope Pius XII — "Inter Complures" (October 24, 1954)

A series of international Marian Congresses begun in 1900 was interrupted in 1912 and not resumed until the Roman congress of 1950. The International Marian Academy (raised to pontifical rank by Pope John XXIII in 1959) was put in charge of the reactivated congress movement. The 1950 congress was divided into a popular "Marian" congress (eighth of its series) and a scientific "Mariological" congress (first of its kind). In October 1954, again under the aegis of the International Marian Academy, the ninth Marian and second Mariological congresses were held together at Rome. On the eve of the first session, Pius XII sent this radio message to the delegates, "Mariology and the Standards Which Govern Its Study." The pope sets before theologians and students the guiding lights of the Church's decisive teaching authority, the scriptures and Catholic tradition. No less heed must be paid to the guidance the Holy Spirit has provided through the official liturgy and the approved devotions of ordinary Christian life. If the right standards are followed, the extremes of both minimism and exaggeration will be avoided. Praise of the Mother of God is ultimately praise of her Son, Christ.