2016 – Jubilee Year of Mercy

What is a Jubilee Year? In the Old Testament, it was an occasion for release from oppressive debts. In the Church, the symbol of the Jubilee Year is the Porta Sancta, the special door in cathedrals and designated churches: we enter asking for pardon and reconciliation. What is the purpose of this Jubilee Year? In “The Face of Mercy,” Pope Francis said, “It is a special time for the Church; a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective. At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives.”

The Jubilee Year of Mercy invites us to think about our belief in God and mercy. Explicit atheism is a modern phenomenon, and there are many causes and varieties. It is much more widespread in the West than in the East. In the 19th century, Darwinism and evolution seemed to eliminate a role for God. The last decade witnessed the “new atheism” of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and others; here the discussion often dealt with the question of evil and suffering. But in the last 50 years, the opening of the universe through magnificent telescopes and other discoveries fills us with awe and wonder as we sense a great presence.

In 1980, Pope St. John Paul II authored a handwritten letter in Polish with the title Dives in Misericordia. He was influenced by revelations given to Sister Faustina, from his home archdiocese of Krakow, Poland, requesting that the message of God’s mercy be made known. “The invisible God,” he wrote, “becomes visible in Christ and through Christ, through His action and His words, and finally through His death on the cross and his resurrection.”

“God Is Love” was Pope Benedict XVI’s first encyclical. There, he spoke of “God’s passionate love for his people—for humanity—which is at the same time a forgiving love. Here Christians can see a dim prefiguring of the mystery of the Cross; so great is God’s love for man that by becoming man he follows him even into death, and so reconciles justice and love” (Deus Caritas Est #10).

Pope Benedict also spoke frequently about the relation of faith and reason. Faith exceeds reason but there must be an intellectual affirmation of the one truth. His writing influenced an Italian scientist-philosopher, Piergiorgio Odifreddi, to write a book dedicated to the pope – Cara Papa, Te Scrivo. In this book, Odifreddi proposed a philosophical-mathematical God, a distant figure presiding over the universe, similar to that presented by Deism. Pope Benedict sent a gracious reply to the author but noted that
Mary, Mother and Witness of God’s Mercy

The Virgin Mary illustrates dimensions of God’s mercy, especially its maternal quality. The oldest extant Marian prayer, dating from the third century, was the Sub tuum praesidium: “We fly thy protection.” The word for protection was originally eusplanchnia, referring to the innermost feelings, the “bowels of benevolence” – To your motherly compassion, we take refuge.

The 11th century Salve Regina (“Hail Holy Queen”) acclaimed Mary as “Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, our hope.” Mary was the mother of Christ, the mercy of the Father, and also the one who uniquely experienced God’s love and mercy. The Salve Regina spoke of Mary’s eyes which reflected God’s mercy: oculos misericordiae.

There is an image of Mary extending her mantle over a city, a monastery, a family. In Germany it is known as the Schutzmantel, in Russia as Pokrov. Mary extends her cloak over the troubled and abandoned. Cardinal Kasper writes, “According to ancient German law, by sheltering children under the mother’s cloak, children born out of wedlock were declared to be children born of marital union (filii mantellati). Thus, this representation says: all of us, who are born in sin (cf. Ps. 51:7) have been made children of God, according to the type and model of the Virgin Mary, by divine mercy.”

Mary’s Magnificat sums up “the entire history of salvation and describes it as the story of God’s mercy.” She first expresses her joy and gratitude: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.” Twice she praises God’s mercy: “He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation . . . . He has come to the help of Israel his servant, for he has remembered his promise of mercy.” Her Magnificat anticipates the Gospel Beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy” (Matt. 5.7).

“Schutzmantelmadonna”
Ravensburg, c. 1480

2016 – Year of Mercy (continued)

three qualities were missing: love, freedom and evil. “A religion that neglects these fundamental questions is empty.”

May this Jubilee Year strengthen our faith: Jesus Christ is the Incarnation of God’s mercy; He stands with his people in their need and his merciful love invites our free response.
Marian Dimensions of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Journeys to the Americas

During 2015, Pope Francis made two apostolic journeys to the Americas. On his first trip, the pope visited South America in July. His second trip was to Cuba and the United States in September. These apostolic journeys had a strong Marian dimension as he visited the national shrines dedicated to Mary.

**Ecuador**

Mary serves as the patroness of Ecuador under the title of Our Lady of Quinche. Her feast day is November 21, the same as the Presentation of Mary. In 1585 near Quito, the Lumbici tribe asked Diego de Robles to carve an image of Mary for them, but they could not pay him, so he then traded it to the Oyacachi for more cedar. This latter tribe told him that the statue looked like a woman who appeared to them on many occasions and told them she would protect their children. The Oyacachi begged him to build an altar for the statue, and after a series of accidents, including a fall from his horse, he built the altar. Pope Francis used this story to remind Ecuadorian clergy, religious, and men and women preparing to join their ranks, that they need to free themselves of “ambition, selfish interests” and egoism.

**Bolivia**

On July 9, 2015, Pope Francis celebrated Mass in Christ the Redeemer Square of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. He concluded his homily by briefly mentioning Mary. The first statement he made was that Mary proclaimed in her Magnificat that “[God] fills the hungry with good things.” This is a key moment of prophecy for Mary as this predicts the multiplication of loaves and fishes, on which the pope preached in his homily. In this passage, the crowd was with Jesus for days and ate nearly all their food. Jesus performed three simple yet profound actions. He took the scant food his disciples had, he blessed it, and he gave it to the people.

While Mary may not be present in this Gospel passage, her influence is clear. In the Gospel of John, one can read the miracle at the wedding feast at Cana. Many similarities are in these passages. At Cana and at the hillside, a large crowd had gathered and Jesus and his disciples were with them. Resources (wine at Cana, food at the hillside) ran out. Jesus took what was at hand, offered a blessing and gave what he blessed. The difference is that Mary trusted Jesus to provide the wine at Cana, while his disciples, although present for that, did not trust that memory while on the hillside. Pope Francis urged his listeners to follow Mary’s example. In doing so, he told them that they will do great deeds despite their seeming lowliness.

Pope Francis visited Bolivia from July 8-10, 2015. The anniversary of the foundation La Paz is July 9. This is the feast day of Our Lady of Peace, *Nuestra Señora de la Paz*.

**Paraguay**

Mary is the patroness of Paraguay under the title of Our Lady of Caacupé. The original statue was carved in the second half of the 16th century by José, a convert of the Guaraní tribe of Native Americans in Paraguay. He carved it after he asked the Blessed Virgin Mary to protect him when another tribe attacked his village.

Caacupé was flooded in 1603. As the floodwaters receded, the statue was found floating. A shrine was built where the statue was retrieved. Her feast day is celebrated on December 8.

On July 11, 2015, Pope Francis celebrated the Mass at this shrine. In his homily, he reflected on the life
of Mary and the hymn “Es tu pueblo, Virgen Pura” (“This Is Your People, Pure Virgin”). He stated that Mary was confused by the angelic greeting but still said, “Yes.” This “yes” was followed by many trials Mary endured, including the challenges of giving birth in an unknown city, fleeing for their lives, and the death of her adult child. The pope further stated that as a result of these pains in her life, Mary understands us and our trials well. She is unobtrusively present in “our hospitals, our schools, and our homes” because she, as our Mother, is always present when her children are in need.

Pope Francis knew his audience would understand his message. As a result of civil wars that ravaged Paraguay, many people gave birth in unknown cities, fled for their lives, and mourned the death of their children. The pope lauded them, especially the women, on serving as a beacon of faith, hope and charity during these times. Before the Mass concluded, Pope Francis declared the shrine a basilica because of its significance in the faith life of Paraguay.

United States

During his visit to the United States, Pope Francis visited the Charitable Center of Saint Patrick Parish in Washington, DC. There he spoke to a group of homeless people that the center served. In this address, he reflected upon the homelessness of the Holy Family.

He first stated that the center’s clients reminded him of Saint Joseph who with Mary struggled in challenging circumstances. He assisted Mary during childbirth in the stable. Jesus, the Son of God, was born and raised in homelessness, first in Bethlehem and then in Egypt. The Pope suggested that some of the Beatitudes may have their roots in Jesus’ childhood experiences. He also conjectured that some questions that his audience must be asking about their homelessness are the same ones Joseph asked, such as, “Why am I in this situation?”

Pope Francis canonized Junipero Serra in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, on September 23, 2015. While in California, Fr. Serra composed a novena in honor of Our Lady.

Cuba

In the early 1600s, a small number of Cubans took their boat out for a trip. While they were on the ocean, a great thunderstorm developed. As the storm neared its climax, they spied a bundle floating in the water, which they decided to retrieve. Immediately after they took the bundle into their boat, the storm ceased. They were amazed as the wrappings were dry despite floating in the water. They opened the bundle and found a statue of Mary holding Jesus, which was also dry. This statue is now housed in El Cobre, a town a little west of Santiago de Cuba.

It was in this shrine that Pope Francis celebrated Mass on September 22, 2015. In his homily, he reflected on the Visitation of Mary. In this scene, Mary travelled to Elizabeth's home at a pace that is neither plodding nor hurried, “[n]either anxious nor distracted,” but instead she traveled with a purpose.

This is the pace that Mary uses today as she continues to visit us with Jesus.

Pope Francis continued his homily by highlighting the ways that Our Lady of Charity at Cobre affected the Cuban people. Despite “suffering and privation,” women in many families mirrored Mary’s attitudes of love and kindness. He challenged his audience as he reminded them that these Marian attitudes cannot stay at home in the family. Instead, these attitudes of faith should compel the Church to share in others’ joys and sorrows, to perform acts of mercy and to foster reconciliation among others. In this way, the Church will become more like Mary in prayer and deed.

Conclusion

Pope Francis visited the major Marian shrines and spoke to varied audiences as he visited on his two apostolic journeys to the Americas. He taught about the significance of healthy Marian devotion and the importance of performing acts of mercy. By doing this the pope reminds us that to imitate Mary we are to be a Church of prayer and of mercy.
The Catholic Library Association presents the Aggiornamento Award every year to an individual or organization that has contributed to parish or community life in the spirit of Blessed John XXIII (1881-1963). This year, the Marian Library and the International Marian Research Institute were recognized for their many outreach initiatives, from digitization of archival materials to the crèche loan program that sends nativity sets to parishes throughout the country. This award recognizes the work of the staff, faculty, librarians, archivists, student workers, volunteers and researchers who share the mission of making the Blessed Virgin Mary better known, loved and served. It was presented in San Diego on March 29, 2016.

I was honored to accept this award on behalf of the library and the institute. It was one of my first opportunities to represent the University of Dayton at a national conference; I began my new position on February 1. Fortunately, I have been able to learn from my predecessor (Father Thompson, who continues to make significant contributions to the library and IMRI) and from the colleagues who have welcomed me with generosity of spirit.

The spirit of “aggiornamento” is relevant to libraries and, indeed, to educational institutions in general. We hold fast to our traditions, certainly, but we are also open to new ideas, such as the new technologies that we can use to connect with patrons. Although this award recognizes work we already do, I hope it will also encourage further work to build community at the University of Dayton and beyond.

I look forward to working with all of you in the years ahead.

Sarah Burke Cahalan

Book Notes

Aidan Nichols

THERE IS NO ROSE: THE MARIOLGY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015

In 1966, A Man for All Seasons won the Academy Award for Best Picture, as well as five other Oscars. The film told the story of Saint Thomas More’s opposition to Henry VIII’s break with the pope so that he could create a national church pliant to his desire to divorce his wife and marry his mistress. The movie concluded with More’s execution, followed by a voice-over as the credits rolled detailing how history vindicated the martyr’s cause.

Months before, the Second Vatican Council concluded. The council signaled a shift in the Church’s approach to the modern world from antagonism to dialogue. In this context, the task of the theologian evolved from defining and drawing out the implications of doctrine to entering into conversation with the wider world. This change impacted Mariology significantly. In a time when ecumenical, liturgical and biblical concerns came to dominate Catholic theology, the postconciliar mariologist has faced the task of justifying the relevance of his own discipline.

In his book, There is No Rose, the English Dominican Aidan Nichols provides an approach to Mariology

I discussed many resources and services in my presentations at CLA, from the online Marian Forum to the library’s ongoing work to build a comprehensive collection of Marian books. Even better, I heard from several people at the conference that they had used our online resources for their own papers or presentations! It is wonderful to know that our work is proving useful to people out in the world.
that is unapologetically doctrinal. The author, who converted from Anglicanism in 1966, does not advocate a return to Mariology as it was practiced before Vatican II, but rather a discerning appropriation of the best of the Church's 20 centuries of tradition, both in the East and the West. In his view, the Council constitutes one point, albeit a highly significant one, on the landscape of Mariology.

This slim volume (only 187 pages) does not seek to give anything like an exhaustive account of the discipline. Instead, it sketches principal doctrinal themes in order to give an impressionistic portrait of “a more full-bodied Marian teaching” in the best traditions of the ressourcement. After examining biblical data, Nichols turns to six doctrinal points of reference. In doing so, he does not limit his focus only to the Divine Maternity, Immaculate Conception and Assumption. He also weighs in on more controversial doctrinal proposals when he considers Mary as Mediatrix of grace, Co-redemptrix and Mother of the Church, with the characteristic robust balance that one has come to expect from his extensive corpus. Attentive to ecumenical considerations, Nichols concludes with an excursus on the dogmatic implications of Orthodox Marian iconography.

It would be a mistake to conclude that the type of Mariology presented in There Is No Rose seeks to reverse the dialogical turn of Vatican II. The work seeks to address the signs of the times two generations after the close of the Council. This year’s Academy Awards were a potent reminder that dialogue with the modern world is a much different game than it was in 1966. When one can no longer presume the existence of willing interlocutors outside the Church and internal secularization inside the Church continues to accelerate, it becomes imperative to devote one’s resources to ensuring a position from which one can enter into dialogue. Nichols’ book provides a helpful starting point for doing so for students of Mariology.

– Fr. Christopher Roberts

Gisbert Greshake
“MARIA-ECCLESIA” PERSPEKTIVEN EINER MARIANISH GRUNDIERTEN THEOLOGIE UND KIRCHENPRAXIS
Regensburg, Pustet, 2014

Gisbert Greshake, senior dogmatic theologian at the University of Freiburg-im-Breslau has produced a massive volume: Mary and Church: Perspectives on a Marian Theology and Church Practice. Greshake has written similar works on the Trinity and eschatology, but, in his 15 page autobiographical introduction, the senior professor assures us that this will be “my last massive (grösseres) work.”

Greshake’s approach is to establish relations between revealed truths, presenting them in a comprehensive and integrated view of God’s saving plan rather than as separate topics. His search is to seek the unity and to relate the truths of the lives of believers. From his youth, he recalls the many references to the Virgin Mary in sermons and devotions, and he laments that they were not integrated into a larger context.

The first section reviews the fundamental doctrines related to Mary. New interpretations are not proposed, but what is sought is their relation to each other, to Scripture, to other teachings of the Church, to the lives of believers. What is the relation of the Immaculate Conception to the Virgin Birth, to the Divine Motherhood? How are the teachings on predestination and original sin related to the Marian doctrines? To what extent are the Marian doctrines participative? Do the Marian doctrines, for example the Assumption, prefigure and anticipate the state of the Church and God’s people.

A major step is the integration of Mary into the Church and into salvation history. Mary is not “beside, over or above,” but rather in the Church, as member, mother, spouse, as pilgrim on the way (LG 58). Mary has “entered deeply” into salvation history and represents its fundamental themes (LG 55, 65). In her person, she presents the great themes of salvation, especially maternal and spousal dimension of God’s covenant.

And there is more. As Christ was foreseen in creation, so texts from the Old Testament Wisdom literature
(especially Sirach and Proverbs) have been associated with the Virgin Mary. For many centuries, these texts have been part of the Marian liturgy. Among those who have seen the Virgin Mary prefigured in the Wisdom texts were Augustine, Hildegard v. Bingen, Louis Grignion de Montfort, and the Russian Orthodox Sergei Bulgakov. Along with Mary foreseen in creation was the Church, the primigenia ecclesia. It was Mary who gave the great response to God’s gift – her Ja-Wort.

A final section deals with Rahner’s observation: Mary is in the Church, and the Church in Mary, but how do we see the Church in Mary? What is the meaning of a Marian Church – for its ministry, spirituality, presence in the world?

This massive work is well-organized, over 600 pages with long, informative footnotes and explanations. At times, the text itself is reduced to small print (which Greshake has indicated may be skipped). There is bibliography of more than 35 pages, devoted almost entirely to German theological literature, especially the works of Rahner, Ratzinger, and von Balthasar. Our hope is that a translator and publisher may soon be found for this significant work.
The University of Dayton wishes to obtain the seven-volume set of this amazing Bible for the permanent collection of the Marian Library as it looks forward to its 75th anniversary.

If you would like to offer your support to make it possible for the University of Dayton and the greater Dayton community to experience and treasure these extraordinary volumes for generations to come, please visit udayton.edu/imri/about-us/give.php or call Jane Dunwoodie at 937-229-4266.

– Kathleen M. Webb
Dean, University Libraries