

Marian Studies

Volume 43 *Proceedings of the Forty-Third
National Convention of the Mariological Society
of America held in Houston, Tex.*

Article 13

1992

Report, 1991-92: New England Region

Matthew F. Morry

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Recommended Citation

Morry, Matthew F. (1992) "Report, 1991-92: New England Region," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 43, Article 13.
Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol43/iss1/13

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REPORT, 1991-92: NEW ENGLAND REGION

The New England Region of the Mariological Society of America held its annual meeting Saturday, October 5, 1991, at Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by the Director, Rev. Matthew F. Morry, O.P. An opening prayer was offered by the Most Reverend Edward M. Grosz. The Very Reverend John F. Cunningham, O.P., President of Providence College, brought the greetings of the college to the gathering. Fr. Morry then introduced the keynote speaker, the Most Reverend Edward M. Grosz, D.D., V.G., Auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo. The title of Bishop Grosz' talk was: "Mary in the Liturgical and Devotional Life of the Church." Bishop Grosz noted that our catechesis about the Mother of Jesus, our understanding of Mary—our Mother—in the life of the Church, and our celebration of Mary in the liturgical and devotional life of the Church must always have as their point of departure the Word of God. The Bishop developed his thesis from Luke 1:26-38—the Annunciation pericope—and from Luke 10:23-24—the words of Jesus to His disciples.

Bishop Grosz pointed out that for the liturgical and devotional life of the Church Mary is present to us as exemplar and model. She is the exemplar and model of faith and hearing, and both are necessary to be a disciple since, as St. Paul observes, "Faith, then, comes through hearing, and what is heard is the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Both in Luke 1:26-38 and 10:23-24, Mary is our exemplar for hearing and responding to the Word of God.

At the Annunciation Mary is the woman, prefigured by the long line of holy women of the Old Testament, who hears the Word of God and in faith responds to the Word of God to receive God in a new and unique manner. She is the Mother of God, God's instrument of His Incarnation. And, so, Mary is the woman most receptive to the presence and power of the Word of God. She is the handmaiden made fruitful through her obedience in faith.

Jesus, too, declares His Mother's identity: it is because of the quality of Mary's hearing the Word of God and her response in faith that she is blessed! Thus, Mary is, in the life of the Church, especially in the liturgical and devotional life of the Church, the one who leads us always to the Word of God.

Now, to hear the Word of God and to respond to it leads us to act, especially to celebrate the sacraments. And Mary is the most excellent exemplar to the Church "in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ, that is, of that interior

disposition with which the Church, the beloved Spouse, closely associated with her Lord, invokes Christ and through Him worships the eternal Father" (*Marialis Cultus*, no. 16)

Further, Mary teaches us to place no obstacle to our hearing and response, for in her faith response we see Word and Sacrament become one in the mystery of love—the profound mystery of the Incarnation; and in that Mystery of the Incarnation the Church is born.

So, both in the liturgy and in our devotion, "Every encounter with Mary can only lead to an encounter with her Son." Mary can do for us what she did for the disciples: she can lead us to a deeper faith as we hear the Word of God. And, our devotion to Mary is deepened as we, in our receptive attitude, receive and hear the Word of God, so that our devotion becomes focused upon the Trinity, our Savior and His Body, the Church. It is Jesus Who said: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. I tell you, many prophets and kings wished to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it" (Luke 10:23-24). This Mary did, and leads us to do!

After the discussion, the audience of some one hundred and ten joined in the Marian Liturgy. Bishop Grosz was the principal celebrant. At this Liturgy, Fr. Thomas Aquinas Collins, O.P., S.T.D., professor of Sacred Scripture at Providence College, preached the homily: "Mary, the Most Beloved Disciple." In his homily, Fr. Collins highlighted the manifestations of God's love for His holy mother. The privilege of the Immaculate Conception raised Mary to a degree of holiness with which the combined holiness of all the angels and saints cannot compare. From the first moment of her life, Mary was endowed with divine splendor. From the beginning, she was, indeed, the most beloved of God.

By an eternal decree, this mother was to be united to her divine Son in a common destiny. Together, "by their respective merits," they saved the world. Contemporary mariologists rightly emphasize what the French Dominican, Père Philippon, calls "the master idea governing and underlying Mariology": the principle of association. The Redeemer and co-redemptress are united in two distinct and complementary aspects of the economy of salvation, namely, the acquisition and the distribution of all graces.

There is a Trinitarian aspect to Mary's role as mediatrix of all graces. The Trinity is the ultimate source of all blessings and graces. These are entrusted to Christ, and Christ has Mary as the channel to bring us these graces. It is not enough to learn about and admire the heavenly gifts bestowed on Mary. We must daily live with Mary as she daily lived the role of the Most Beloved Disciple!

A luncheon, with a brief business meeting, followed the Liturgy. The Annual Meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

REV. MATTHEW F. MORRY, O.P.
Director, New England Region, MSA