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Matthew F. Morry

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REPORT, 1986-87: NEW ENGLAND REGION

The New England Region of the Mariological Society of America held its annual meeting Saturday, October 25, 1986, 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 George H. Pearce, S.M. Fr. Morry introduced the keynote speaker, the Reverend James C. Turro, S.S.L., Ph.D., professor of New Testament at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington, New Jersey. The title of Fr. Turro's talk was: "Recent Insights in Mariology." Fr. Turro developed the theme of Mary, Ark of the Covenant, with reference to Luke 1:35. He focused upon two key notions: HOLY SPIRIT and OVERSHADOWING.

He noted that HOLY SPIRIT carries a connotation of God at work to create, to bring life into existence. In *Genesis* 1:1-2 lies the basis for this concept. This Spirit of God is a creative force that is life-giving, enabling and strengthening people, e.g., Gideon, Jephtah, Samson (*Judges* cc. 6-8, 11-12, 13-16). It is this same force Who would come to Mary and bring life.

The speaker examined the notion of OVERSHADOWING in the context of the episode of the Ark of the Covenant. In that episode, God, we learn, sought to make His presence more tangible (*Exodus*, *passim*; *I Sam.*, *passim*; *II Sam.*, *passim*). The Ark was sheltered in the "tent of reunion" and then in the Temple in Jerusalem. But this tangible presence did create tension: there was a fear of death about approaching too closely to the *presence*. That *overshadowing* of the tent denoted "God deeply, overwhelmingly present." It is this Old Testament meaning we find in Luke's use of the term in the Annunciation pericope: "The creative power of God's Holy Spirit would descend upon Mary in the way the Glory of God

had descended upon the tent of witness and filled it with the Divine Presence." This is why the Divine Presence in Mary's womb is to be called God's son.

Luke's account answers various questions about the identity of Jesus. Who is Jesus? He is God. But, *when* and *how* did Jesus become God? After His death and at the time of the Resurrection? At the occasion of His Baptism by John the Baptist? At the moment of His conception in His Mother's womb? Luke gives us to understand that Jesus is God before His conception. Luke receives this teaching from the Pauline corpus: *Philippians* 2:6-11, and *Colossians* 1:15-17.

Now it is in the scene following the Annunciation, the Visitation episode, that some commentators see a heightened suggestion of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant. They see a parallel between this Visitation episode and David's transfer of the Ark (*II Sam.* 6): David rising to go into the hill country of Judah, the Ark remaining in the house of Obededom for three months, and the blessings coming to the whole house of Obededom.

Further, *Luke* 11:27-28 harmonizes with the insights of the Visitation scene: the exclamation, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (1:42), anticipates the sentiments of the woman in the crowd (11:27); and the declaration, "Blessed is she who has believed for the things promised her by the Lord will be accomplished in her" (1:45), is echoed in 11:28, "more blessed are those who hear God's word and keep it." Luke's consistency underlines the identity of Mary, truly the Ark of the Covenant: the woman cries out to praise Mary for her role in the physical existence of Jesus.

The audience of one hundred and twenty joined in the Marian Liturgy which followed the address. Archbishop Pearce, S.M., was the principal concelebrant. At this Liturgy, Fr. Adrian Dabash, O.P., chaplain of the Providence College community and professor of art at Providence College, delivered the homily. He developed the sense of the devotion to Mary by the faithful. In his discourse, Fr. Dabash took note of the reality of Marian devotion, especially as it is grounded in and fostered by religious art. He showed how particular

forms of religious art are particularly apt for fostering Marian devotion, in this instance he focused on *iconography*. He offered, as illustrations of particularly effective icons, several icons in the cathedrals and shrines of Germany and Switzerland. The human spirit is especially imaginative and inventive in rendering praise and honor to the Mother of God.

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