

Marian Studies

Volume 48 *The Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Icon of the Church, Intercessor: Ecumenical Perspectives*

Article 19

1997

Report, 1996-97: New England Region

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Recommended Citation

Morry, Matthew F. (1997) "Report, 1996-97: New England Region," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 48, Article 19.
Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol48/iss1/19

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REPORT, 1996-97: NEW ENGLAND REGION

The New England Region of the Mariological Society of America held its annual meeting on Saturday, October 19, 1996. The Priory of St. Thomas, on the campus of Providence College, welcomed members and guests to the Priory for the meeting.

The Director of the New England Region, Fr. Matthew Morry, O.P., S.T.D., called the meeting into session at 10:05 a.m. The Most Reverend George H. Pearce, S.M., D.D., offered the opening prayer and blessing. Greetings and welcome from the Providence College were brought to the one hundred and thirty five members and guests by Rev. J. Stuart McPhail, O.P., Vice President for Student Services.

The Very Reverend Carleton Parker Jones, O.P., S.T.D., Prior of St. Mary Priory, New Haven, Connecticut, delivered the Keynote Address: "John Henry Cardinal Newman and Mary, Mother of God, the New Eve." Fr. Carleton Jones underlined two basic conclusions of Cardinal Newman with respect to Mary: Mary is the Mother of God, and she assumed her office of perpetual intercession for the People of God, the Church.

From these basic conclusions Fr. Jones presented the core of Cardinal Newman's teaching concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary. He noted that while Newman was circumspect about putting forth certain "foreign" Marian devotions, he was firm in presenting the *Tradition* and consistent Catholic teaching concerning Mary, the Mother God, which the Anglicans—the central focus of Newman's remarks concerning Mary—were bound to acknowledge by their own principles.

Fr. Carleton Jones singled out the principal objection of Anglicans to this Marian Catholic teaching: it was "an unwarranted addition to the witness of Scripture and the Tradition of the undivided Church." Fr. Jones then analyzed Cardinal Newman's response through the distinction between *faith* and *devotion*: "By 'faith' I mean the Creed and assent to the Creed; . . . by 'devotion' I mean such religious honours as belong to the object of faith, and the payment of those honours."

The Catholic Church's faith concerning Mary was Mary as the *Second* or *New Eve* rooted in the *Protoevangelion*, as witnessed by the early Fathers, especially Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian. Fr. Jones noted that Newman argues that "as the fall of man was brought on by Eve's failure to act with faith and obedience, so man's restoration was begun by Mary's personal exercise of these virtues." God allows us to see Mary's cooperation in Christ's redeeming activity. This cooperation witnesses Mary's *sanctity* and *dignity*, from which follow the Catholic dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.

Our Keynote Speaker elaborated upon a reason why Anglicans found it difficult to accept the Immaculate Conception: Grace is a mere external approbation, and this notion is related to the parents of Mary and not specifically and solely to Mary. However, because of her *dignity* as Mother of God, as model of faith and obedience, there is the convergence of the Patristic witness and the response of the Catholic Church's acknowledgment of Mary's "fullness of grace" and her Assumption.

In conclusion, Fr. Carleton Jones invited us to follow the example of Cardinal Newman as Catholic ecumenists, to bring into such a dialogue the *Woman*, the most

powerful of all the influences toward union: Mary, the Mother of God, the New Eve, and the Mother of the Church.

The discussion following the address permitted Fr. Jones to elaborate upon certain aspects of Newman's response to his former Anglican co-religionists and friends. There was focus upon the sensitivity to Marian *devotion* and Mary's place in the life of prayer and worship among Roman Catholics.

Following the Keynote Address and discussion was a Marian Liturgy in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Priory. The Reverend Matthew F. Morry, O.P., S.T.D., was celebrant, with fifteen concelebrants. The Very Reverend Robert J. Hennessey, O.P., S.T.D., Prior of St. Thomas Aquinas Priory and professor in the Department of Theology of Providence College, delivered the homily.

Fr. Hennessey reflected on Mary's Motherhood—of God and of the Church. The Immaculate Virgin received God's call and conceived Jesus in her womb, and, giving birth to the Son of God, she in turn nurtured the Church at its very beginning. The death of Jesus is for all the unutterable expression of Divine Love, for in the death of her Son Mary again became Mother—to all those brought to life in that death. Mary is the *Model* for the People of God in their loving communication with God, for she was united with the Apostles as they made their prayers one for the coming of the Holy Spirit. And, Mary is the *Type* and the living Model for the People of God—the Church—reaching out in its progress to the Eternal Love, to the Presence of God.

Following the Marian Liturgy, luncheon was served in the dining room of the Priory. Fr. Hennessey greeted and welcomed the members and guests. The Annual Meeting of the New England Region was adjourned after the brief Business Meeting at 2:55 p.m.

*Matthew F. Morry, O.P., S.T.D.
Director, New England Region, MSA*