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OBSERVATIONS ON FR. KOEHLER'S PAPER

In serving as the respondent to Fr. Koehler's presentation of his topic, "The Marian Teachings of Paul VI," I should like to highlight and comment upon certain aspects of his paper with a view towards raising some questions in the interest of inviting your discussion. Bearing this in mind, let us single out several statements in the text that are to be especially noted for our purposes.

Fr. Koehler points out that Paul VI wrote *Signum Magnum*, an apostolic exhortation to the Bishops, "to extend the conciliar Marian teaching and clarify some of its declarations." The occasion of its composition in 1967 was the 50th anniversary of the apparitions of our Lady at Fatima; the Holy Father made a pilgrimage of peace there on the day commemorating the first apparition, May 13th. Fr. Koehler particularly focuses our attention upon the Marian interpretation of the "great sign" that appeared in the sky, "a woman clothed with the sun" (Apoc. 12), in this document. One of the topics that we might well wish to discuss is the way in which Mary may be symbolized in the inspired text. We must be ready to support such an interpretation, especially in light of the difficulties against it (Cf. *Mary in the New Testament*, ed. by R. E. Brown, et al., pp. 235-239, 292-293). The possibility of a Marian interpretation, found in the liturgy of the Catholic Church, is not excluded by the New Testament scholars who collaborated on this book, at least in a secondary sense subordinated to the primary reference to the People of God in both covenants. And so we ought to examine further the biblical basis of the Mariological meaning found in our Tradition.

Pope Paul VI, as Fr. Koehler's paper so clearly demonstrates,

used instruments of unique doctrinal and pastoral value in communicating his Marian teaching. On June 30, 1968, he issued the *Credo of the People of God* which places Marian doctrine and devotion in the proper perspective of Vatican II's "hierarchy of truths," reflected in the Christocentric and ecclesio-typical Mariology of the Council's *Lumen Gentium* (ch. 8). Also, his apostolic exhortation on the right renewal of Marian devotion, *Marialis Cultus*, issued February 2, 1974, is an excellent example of the Holy Father's Marian teaching. This document was significantly influenced by the Pope's preaching to pilgrims throughout his Pontificate on the true meaning of Marian devotion, particularly in relationship to the central mystery of our Christian faith, the triune God revealed in Christ our Redeemer. How fitting that so much of his Marian teaching comes to us in the form of homiletic preaching, the instrument of the Magisterium which keeps the teaching Church in continuous contact with the faithful.

Finally, I should like to call your special attention to the last two sections of Fr. Koehler's excellent paper, "The *Via Pulchritudinis*" and "The Intercessory Function of Mary." The "*via pulchritudinis*," the "way of beauty," was an expression used by Pope Paul VI in his address to the International Mariological Congress held in Rome, May 16, 1974. He told us theologians who were present, and through us our colleagues as well, that we ought to consider this way of contemplating Mary along with the *via veritatis*. Since the *via pulchritudinis* has been emphasized in other papers delivered at this convention, particularly those on "The Marian Teaching of Pope John Paul II" and on "Mary in the Doctrine of Urs von Balthasar," we might profitably pursue this aspect of Pope Paul VI's Marian teaching in our discussion. How do you understand the phrase? How does it complement the *via veritatis* in Mariology? How should we Mariologists go about incorporating a clearer expression of the *via pulchritudinis* in Marian doctrine and devotion? Concerning the question of Mary's intercessory role in our daily

Christian lives, I would like to begin our discussion by asking Fr. Koehler what he thinks about praying *with* Mary as well as *to* her.

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