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THE HEAVENLY MESSAGES OF “OUR LADY OF AMERICA”

A CALL FOR SANCTIFICATION OF THE FAMILY THROUGH PURITY AND THE DIVINE INDWELLING IN SOULS

*Dwight Campbell, J.D., S.T.D.**

Introduction

From 1938 until 1984, a series of heavenly messages were communicated to Sister Mary Ephrem (later Sister Mary Mildred Neuzil) (1916-2000), initially by Our Lord and then primarily by Our Lady. In these private revelations the Blessed Virgin revealed her desire that devotion be paid to her under the title “Our Lady of America.”¹ The messages center upon two major themes: first, a call for sanctification of the family through purity with special recourse to Mary’s Immaculate Heart as a model; and second, a renewed emphasis on the reality of the Divine Indwelling in souls sanctified by God’s grace, in Our Lady herself as the model *par excellence* of this indwelling, and in family members who are called to lead holy and pure lives.

Bishop Paul F. Leibold, Vicar General and later Archbishop of Cincinnati, who was Sister Mary Ephrem’s spiritual director

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¹ In that Our Lady used the title “Our Lady of America” rather than “the Americas,” it appears that these messages were intended especially for those in the United States rather than all the peoples in North and South America.

from 1940 until his death in 1972,² allowed the messages to be published with a *nihil obstat* and an *imprimatur* in a booklet titled *Our Lady of America*, first in 1960 and then again in 1971.³ In a letter of May 31, 2007, addressed to his fellow U.S. bishops, then Archbishop of St. Louis (and now Cardinal) Raymond L. Burke stated that it "can be concluded canonically . . . that the devotion was both approved by Archbishop Leibold and, what is more, actively promoted by him."⁴

I will first set forth a short biographical sketch of Sister Mary Ephrem along with a history of the messages, then discuss the main thrust of the messages: the call for sanctification of the family through the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity and the need for purity of life as a necessary means to this end. Next I will consider the content of the messages that center upon the Divine Indwelling, in Our Lady herself and in the souls of the sanctified. I will treat our understanding of this mystery in light of its revelation in Scripture, and as set forth in the teaching of the Church and in the reflections of theologians, saints and spiritual writers. Then I will examine the reality of the Divine Indwelling in the soul of Our Lady as a model for all the faithful

² The True Story of Our Lady of America," Part II, God's Choice of a Messenger for Our Times, 2-3 (n.a., unnumbered) (hereafter cited as True Story), available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.com/truestory.php>. Fr. Paul Leibold became Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General of Cincinnati in 1958, Bishop of Evansville, Ind. (1966-1969) and Archbishop of Cincinnati (1969-1972).

³ Sr. M. M. Neuzil, *Our Lady of America* (copyright Sr. M. M. Neuzil, 1989), hereafter cited as *OLA*. The same booklet went through later reprintings (e.g., in 1989 and 1993) and contain additional messages dating from April 4, 1960 through Jan. 3, 1984 (see pp. 35-46), and these messages do not carry an *imprimatur*, per a stamped message on the back inside cover. N.B.:The (unnamed) author of "True Story" specifies the messages that were given by way of interior locution, and I will cite them in this fashion even though it is unclear from the diary (*OLA*) as to which messages were given by locutions.

⁴ Letter, "To the Bishops of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: Regarding Our Lady of America." Cardinal Burke's secretary emailed to me a copy of this letter. A copy is available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/Approval.php>. In this letter Archbishop Burke says: "In addition, over the years, other Bishops have approved the devotion and have participated in public devotion to the Mother of God, under the title of Our Lady of America." N.B.:With this letter, Archbishop Burke was offering a canonical opinion, which is not definitive pronouncement.

to imitate, and conclude with a summary of the present state and progress of devotion to the Blessed Virgin under the title, Our Lady of America.

Biographical Sketch of Sister Mary Ephrem Neuzil

Mildred Mary Neuzil was born on August 2, 1916, in Brooklyn, New York, but shortly thereafter her family moved to Cleveland, Ohio. In 1930, at age fourteen, Mildred entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus and in 1933, at age seventeen, she professed first vows and received the name Sister Mary Ephrem. In 1938, while working at the chancery in Cincinnati, she began to experience interior locutions in which Jesus made known to her that her future mission would concern the sanctification of the family. In 1947, her spiritual director, Fr. Paul F. Leibold, instructed her to begin writing down her mystical experiences in a diary. These diary entries became the basis for the booklet that was later privately published under the title *Our Lady of America*.⁵ Locutions, revelations and apparitions continued until 1984, but the most important messages, which deal with the call for purity in the U.S. and the stress upon Divine Indwelling, occurred between 1954 and 1959.

After working in various cities throughout the U.S. in the 1940s, Sister Mary Ephrem returned to Ohio in 1949; thereafter she was assigned in different locations in Ohio and Indiana. In 1954, some Precious Blood sisters began a contemplative cloistered branch of the order in New Riegel, Ohio, which she entered in 1958. The contemplative branch was suppressed in 1979,⁶ and the sisters moved to Fostoria, Ohio, where they were given a residence.⁷ Sister Mary Mildred Neuzil, as she was known after the move to Fostoria, died in 2000.

⁵ "True Story," Part II, God's Choice of a Messenger for Our Times, 1-3 (unnumbered), available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.com/truestory.php>.

⁶ Letter of Archbishop Burke to his fellow bishops, May 31, 2007. Cf. "The 53rd Anniversary of Our Lady of America: The Message and the Messenger," 4-5, which relates the unfortunate account of the suppression of the contemplative branch, which referred to itself as the Contemplative Sisters of the Indwelling Trinity, available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.com/whatsnew/TheMessageandtheMessenger.pdf>.

⁷ "True Story," Part V, "The Difficult and Painful Separation," 7 (unnumbered). Cf. "The 53rd Anniversary of Our Lady of America: The Message and the Messenger," 5.

The Messages from 1954 through 1957

Although locutions began in 1938, it was not until 1954 that Jesus, by way of interior locutions, explained to Sister how her mission for the sanctification of the family would be carried out, stressing the need for family members to turn to Him in faith and for the Blessed Trinity to dwell within their souls.⁸ For example, in the summer of 1954, Jesus told her: "My daughter, I am not loved in the homes of men. And because I am not loved, the Divine Trinity refuses to dwell in them."⁹ On November 8, 1954, Our Lady spoke to Sister Mary Ephrem by way of interior locution, setting forth the Holy Family as the example *par excellence* of family life centered around Christ, where the family becomes an earthly paradise because the Blessed Trinity dwells among its members:

It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined, for ours was the earthly paradise, where once again God walked among men. . . .

The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then, you also, my children, will become another paradise. God will then walk among you and you will have peace.¹⁰

The Blessed Virgin Mary's first visible/sensible manifestation to Sister Mary Ephrem occurred on September 25, 1956, when she appeared as Our Lady of Lourdes. She promised that "greater miracles than those granted at Lourdes and Fatima would be granted here in America, the United States in particular, if we would do as she desires."¹¹ Our Lady then told Sister that she was especially pleased to be honored in the United States through "the glorious and the unique privilege of the

⁸ Ibid., 4. Cf. OLA, 4.

⁹ Locution of July 11, 1954, in OLA, 5-6.

¹⁰ Locution of Nov. 8, 1954, in OLA, 8.

¹¹ OLA, 9.

Immaculate Conception."¹² The next day, September 26, Our Lady appeared to Sister twice under the new image of Our Lady of America, the first time after morning Mass. She wore a white veil, a white mantle and a robe of pure white, and held a lily in her right hand. On her head was a brilliant gold crown. Her feet were bare, but sometimes covered by the moving clouds on which she stood. With her left hand she appeared to lift the upper part of her mantle so as to make visible her Heart, which was encircled with red roses—the symbol of suffering as it was revealed to Sister—and was sending forth flames of fire from atop. The Blessed Virgin said to Sister Mary Ephrem: "I am Our Lady of America. I desire that my children honor me, especially by the purity of their lives."¹³ That afternoon, during a Holy Hour, Our Lady appeared again and spoke these words:

My child, I entrust you with this message that you must make known to my children in America. I wish it to be the country dedicated to my purity. The wonders I will work will be the wonders of the soul. They must have faith and believe firmly in my love for them. I desire that they be children of my Pure Heart. I desire, through my children of America, to further the cause of faith and purity among peoples and nations. Let them come to me with confidence and simplicity, and I, their Mother, will teach them to become pure like to my Heart that their own hearts may be more pleasing to the Heart of my Son.¹⁴

The following day, September 27, Our Lady appeared again, holding the world in her hands as she wept over it, and said:

Assuage the sorrow of my Heart over the ingratitude of sinful men by the love and chasteness of your lives. . . . I come to you, O children of America, as a last resort. I plead with you to listen to my voice. Cleanse your souls in the Precious Blood of My Son. Live in His Heart, and take me in that I may teach you to live in great purity of heart which is so pleasing to God. Be my army of chaste soldiers, ready to fight to the death to preserve the purity of your souls. I am the Immaculate One, Patroness of your land. Be my faithful children as I have been your faithful Mother.¹⁵

¹² *OLA*, 10.

¹³ *OLA*, 10. An image of Our Lady of America as described above appears at the end of this paper.

¹⁴ *OLA*, 11.

¹⁵ *OLA*, 12.

On October 6, 1956, Sister Mary Ephrem, with Our Lady at her side and under her inspiration and direction, penned a prayer to Our Lady, Patroness of the United States.¹⁶ On November 15th of that year Our Lady taught Sister Mary Ephrem a short prayer, "By thy Holy and Immaculate Conception, O Mary, deliver us from evil."¹⁷ That same day, she asked Sister to have a statue made in the likeness of her first appearance as Our Lady of America and to have this statue placed permanently in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., where she would be honored there in a special way as "Our Lady of America, the Immaculate Virgin."¹⁸ Our Lady's request can be viewed as a providential complement to the action of the U.S. Bishops at the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore, when on May 10, 1846, they petitioned Pope Pius IX to have the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title of her Immaculate Conception, proclaimed Patroness of the United States. In 1847, the Holy Father granted the petition and Mary officially became Patroness of the United States under this glorious title. Notably, this was seven years before Bl. Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception to be a Dogma of our Faith. In 1910, Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, Rector of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., conceived the idea of a national shrine to Our Lady, and on September 23, 1920, James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, laid the cornerstone. After delays caused by the Great Depression and World War II, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was dedicated by Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, on November 20, 1959.¹⁹

¹⁶ *OLA*, 13. This prayer, in *OLA*, 47, titled "Prayer to the Immaculate Conception," is reproduced at the end of this paper.

¹⁷ *OLA*, 14. This short prayer appears on a medal that Our Lady asked to be struck in a message on Feb. 11, 1958, *OLA*, 25, which I will discuss *infra*.

¹⁸ *OLA*, 14. Archbishop Burke's May 31, 2007 letter to the U.S. Bishops regarding Our Lady of America says Archbishop Leibold authorized the Weberding Woodcarving Shop at Batesville, Ind., to carve a statue of Our Lady of America, and this statue was venerated with regular public devotions in the Our Lady of the Nativity Convent (the contemplative branch of the Precious Blood Sisters) in New Riegel, Ohio; another statue was made with the permission of the late Bishop William G. Connare of Greensburg, Pa., which he allowed to be displayed at the Carmel of the Assumption in Latrobe, Pa.

¹⁹ "True Story" Part I, God's Preparation for Mary's Visit, 1-2 (unnumbered), available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.com/truestory.php>; and "Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception," Historical Timeline of the National Shrine,

Sister relates that, throughout 1957 and 1958, Our Lady's warnings came to her "again and again."²⁰ The Virgin Mary's words in these messages are reminiscent of her messages earlier in the century at Fatima, Portugal. In January, 1957, Our Lady warned that "suffering and anguish, such as never before experienced, is about to overtake mankind. It is the darkest hour. But if men will come to me, my Immaculate Heart will make it bright again with the mercy which my Son will rain down through my hands." Our Lady instructed Sister Mary Ephrem to make known to the U.S. Bishops "the longings of my Immaculate Heart to establish the reign of my Divine Son in the hearts of men and thus save them from the scourge of heaven."²¹ In April of 1957, she called for her children to "reform their lives," and said that if man "will not take upon himself the penance necessary to atone for his sins and those of others, God in His justice will have to send upon him punishment necessary to atone for his transgressions"²²; and on October 7, 1957, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, she said: "Making the rosary a family prayer is very pleasing to me. . . . Those who are found in the circle of my rosary will never be lost. I myself will lead them to the throne of my Son, to be eternally united to Him."²³

To briefly summarize, these messages contain an urgent call for the faithful to struggle heroically, even unto death, in order to preserve that purity of heart of which the Heart of Mary—all pure and spotless from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception—is the most sublime symbol. Purity among family members, supported by a lived faith, is the means by which the Blessed Trinity will dwell in their souls and by which God will "walk among them" in their homes and families as He did with the Holy Family at Nazareth. Moreover, this purity among

available at http://www.nationalshrine.com/site/c.osJRKVPBjnh/b.4784521/k.E4CB/Historical_Timeline.htm. The latter website notes that, in 1990, Pope John Paul II raised the Shrine to the level of a minor basilica.

²⁰ *OLA*, 14.

²¹ *OLA*, 15.

²² *OLA*, 17.

²³ *OLA*, 21.

families in the United States is to be a model for the world and a "cause of faith and purity among people and nations." As at Fatima, Our Lady here calls for prayer and penance in order to avert the just punishments of God, and offers her Immaculate Heart, along with the daily recitation of the Rosary, as a safe refuge.

The Heart of the Messages: The Divine Indwelling

On August 5, 1957, on the Feast of Our Lady of the Snow, Our Lady appeared to Sister Mary Ephrem and related what appears to be the central message in this series of heavenly communications, namely, the Divine Indwelling as she herself experienced it, and the need for this great gift to be known, appreciated, and attained by all. As Sister Mary Ephrem tells it:

[A]s I knelt in my room, Our Lady spoke to me about the Divine Indwelling. It was her life and she lived it perfectly, always conscious of His presence, never forgetting that all her greatness came from within, from Him Who dwelt there, working, loving, and doing good through her. This is what Our Lady means when she speaks of reformation, renewal. It is this about which she is so concerned, namely, sanctification from within. . . . She seemed anxious to impress me with some idea of the greatness of this gift of God to us, namely, His Divine Presence within our souls through sanctifying grace.²⁴

On November 23rd of that year Our Lady complemented in a striking manner her message of August 5th about the Divine Indwelling, by both the manner of her appearance in a vision and her words. "This vision," says Sister, "is very important, as it reveals Our Lady as she really and truly was, the Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God." The Virgin appeared standing on a globe with her right foot resting on a crescent moon and her left foot on the snout of a small dragon that breathed fire out of its jaws. She once again was dressed all in white, but her veil was held about her head by a wreath of roses, and a large white rose rested on each foot. On her breast appeared what Sister understood to be the symbol of the Divine

²⁴ *OLA*, 18.

Indwelling, "the Triangle and [within it] the Eye." A strong beam of light issued from the Divine Presence within Our Lady onto the globe at her feet, and halfway around her, above her head, appeared a scroll on which were written in letters of gold the words: "All the glory of the King's daughter is within" (Ps. 45 [44]:14). At this time Sister heard the words: "I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within."²⁵

On February 11, 1958, the Feast of the Apparition of Mary at Lourdes, Our Lady insisted that the youth in the U.S. should be leaders of a "movement of renewal" which would result from "instilling into them, not only the knowledge of the Divine Indwelling, but a serious study of It, living It in a way that the Divine Presence becomes, as it were, an intimate and necessary part of their daily living." Mary said this movement would thereafter spread to all nations throughout the earth.²⁶ She asked that a picture or a statue of herself as Our Lady of America be honored and venerated in every Christian home,²⁷ and that a medal be struck that would be a "shield against evil"²⁸ and an aid "for the grace of intense purity of heart" and for a deep love for herself and her Divine Son.²⁹ On one side of the medal appears the image of Our Lady of America, and on the outer edge encircling the image are the words, "By thy Holy and Immaculate Conception, O Mary, deliver us from evil."³⁰ On the other side appears the Coat of Arms of the Christian Family, on which the Divine Indwelling is represented by the Triangle and the Eye within it, all on a shield of the Precious Blood of Christ, through which sanctifying grace

²⁵ *OLA*, 22-23. Sister Mary Ephrem says (22) that Our Lady appeared to her on both Nov. 22nd and 23rd, but on Nov. 23rd "the experience was more detailed." N.B.: The quote from Ps. 45 [44]:14 is from the Douay-Rheims English translation.

²⁶ *OLA*, 24-25.

²⁷ *OLA*, 26.

²⁸ *OLA*, 25.

²⁹ *OLA*, 48.

³⁰ *OLA*, 47. A picture of this medal (front and back side), with an explanation, appears at the end of this article.

was made possible to fallen man.³¹ On May 1, 1960, on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, Bishop Leibold approved the medal and its distribution.³²

Significantly, on the same day, February 11, 1958, Our Lady confirmed her message given at Fatima forty-one years earlier, telling Sister Mary Ephrem: "My Immaculate Heart will win in the end, and the Spirit of Christ will dwell in the hearts of all men. Those in whom this Spirit is not found will be condemned to eternal hell-fire."³³ The year before, in 1957, on the Feast of her Immaculate Heart, Mary said: "My heart, my Immaculate Heart, is the channel through which the graces of the Sacred Heart are given to men." At that time she also said that it is not enough for her children to consecrate themselves to her Immaculate Heart; what she desires most of all is "reformation of life. There must be sanctification from within."³⁴ Earlier that same year (1957), Our Lady told Sister Mary Ephrem:

But to make your hearts grow more and more like to the Heart of the Son, you must go to the Mother, whose heart is most like His. From this Pure and Immaculate Heart you will learn all that will make you more

³¹ *OLA*, 47-48. On the Coat of Arms also appear the Cross and two lilies, on each of which appears a burning heart, which represents sanctification of the family through the imitation of the Holy Family. A flaming sword passes through the shield, symbolic of Divine Love, and the Rosary which surrounds the shield "indicates a most profitable means of drawing closer to the Holy Family, through devout meditation on the mysteries." Atop, on the outer circumference of this side of the medal, appear the words "Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto," and at the bottom the words "Jesu, Maria, Joseph."

³² "True Story" Part IV, The National Shrine, . . . , 5 (unnumbered); Bishop Leibold "had the medal struck and personally paid for all medals until his death in 1972. He designed the prayer pamphlet to go with the medal. It contained the Prayer to the Immaculate Conception and the Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity, as well as the magnificent explanation of the medal itself. In 1962, Bishop George Rehring of Toledo, Ohio, approved distribution of the medal.

³³ *OLA*, 23.

³⁴ "Excerpts from Our Lady's address during her visit on the feast of the Immaculate Heart, August 22, 1957," *OLA*, 18. N.B.: At this time, in 1957, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was celebrated universally on August 22nd; it is still celebrated on this date in the 1962 *Roman Missal*.

pleasing to the Divine Heart of the Son of God. The Holy Trinity looks down with infinite delight upon such souls and makes them Its heaven upon earth.³⁵

Our Lady also said: "My Immaculate Heart desires with great desire to see the kingdom of Jesus my Son established in all hearts."³⁶ Thus, Our Lady reveals that her Immaculate Heart is the channel of graces that come from Christ's Sacred Heart for the sanctification of souls. Moreover, they reveal that the triumph of her Heart, that she promised at Fatima and confirmed with Sister Mary Ephrem, is in essence an interior victory, which is attained through embracing lives of purity with the Heart of Mary as our model to study and imitate, in order to conform our hearts like unto the Heart of the Redeemer so that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit may dwell in our hearts and that Christ may reign therein.

The Divine Indwelling Considered

Given that the Divine Indwelling is the real heart of the messages granted to Sister Mary Ephrem by both Our Lord and Our Lady; and given that the Scriptures are replete with references to it and that it has been treated by saints and theologians over the centuries and thus forms part of the teaching handed on in Sacred Tradition, at this point I will consider this topic which is so important to our spiritual life. Fr. Edward Leen says that for

... the faithful of our own day ... the sweet and wondrous and most consoling doctrine of the special and abiding presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul enjoying the grace of God, has become greatly obscured. If they hear this truth of faith referred to, they are little moved by it, for they do not grasp the import in any but the vaguest manner. Yet it is a doctrine that is of fundamental importance ... It is a doctrine that is intimately bound up with an adequate understanding of what constitutes the *supernatural* in religion—so intimately that it is scarce possible to have

³⁵ Feb. 3, 1957, *OLA*, 16.

³⁶ March, 1957, *OLA*, 17.

an adequate idea of the supernatural, without having a clear understanding of the invisible *mission* of the Holy Ghost to the soul and all that flows from this *mission* by way of consequence.³⁷

Father Leen's words are even truer today than when he penned them more than seventy years ago, due to the theological debate and resulting confusion over the topic of the supernatural, or more precisely, over the relation of nature and grace, that has taken place since the early to mid-twentieth century.³⁸

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), in discussing the works *ad extra* of the Blessed Trinity and the Trinitarian missions, states:

The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity. "If a man loves me," says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home [or dwelling] with him" (Jn. 14:23).³⁹

³⁷ Rev. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., *The Holy Ghost and His Work in Souls* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), 148-49. The imprimatur for the book was given in 1937.

³⁸ An extended exposition on the nature/grace question is not my goal here. Suffice it to say that Henri de Lubac's *Le mystère du surnaturel* ([Paris]: Aubier, 1965), in English, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), which rejected the sixteenth century Dominican Cardinal Tommaso de Vio Cajetan's (1469-1534) theory of pure nature in his commentary on St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, is one of the landmark works which heightened the debate. But in recent years de Lubac's treatment of the topic has come under criticism; see, e.g., Fr. Brian Mullady, O.P., S.T.D., *Man's Desire for God* (Bloomington, IN: Fr. Brian Mullady, 2003), chap. 1, "The Natural Desire to See God," 6, where he states that de Lubac's own solution to the question "is more problematic than his criticism of Cajetan"; and Lawrence Feingold, "The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters," Dissert. (Rome: Pontificia Università Sanctae Crucis, 2001), in which Feingold defends Cajetan's interpretation of St. Thomas contra de Lubac. Feingold's dissertation has been published in book form under the same title (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010).

³⁹ CCC 260. N.B.: The Greek noun used in this last phrase of Jn. 14:23, *μονήν*, can be better translated as "dwelling" or "dwelling place."

Theologians tell us, following St. Thomas Aquinas,⁴⁰ that God as Creator is in, or present to, all things by reason of His *power* (He holds or conserves all things in being), His *presence* or *knowledge* (all things fall under His gaze), and His *essence* (His being fills everything that exists, and where anything is there God must be).⁴¹ But He is present in a special way, nay, in a superior and more intimate manner, in those rational creatures in whom He dwells. As St. Augustine says, echoing the Patristic Tradition on this point:

Although God is everywhere wholly present, He does not dwell in everyone. . . . God is everywhere by the presence of His divinity, but not everywhere by the grace of His indwelling. . . . He that is everywhere does not dwell in all, and He does not dwell equally in those in whom He does dwell.⁴²

In the context of explaining the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit, as the divine Person sent by the Father and the Son to sanctify souls, St. Thomas highlights the difference between what he calls the "common mode" of God being in all things, and His dwelling in rational creatures who are baptized and in a state of sanctifying grace:

For God is in all things by His essence, power and presence, according to His one common mode, as the cause existing in the effects which participate in His goodness. Above and beyond this common mode,

⁴⁰ St. Thomas, in his *Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 8, a. 3, sets forth the classic teaching: "Therefore, God is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His power; He is by His presence in all things, inasmuch as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being."

⁴¹ See Fr. A. M. Henry, O.P., *The Holy Spirit*, trans. from the French by J. Lundberg and M. Bell, Vol. 18 of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, sec. II, The Basic Truths, also the 51st volume in order of publication, ed. Henri Daniel Rops (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), chap. 7, "The Mission of the Holy Spirit," 109, who uses the term "knowledge" rather than "presence" to describe the second mode of God's presence. Cf. Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*, trans. from the French by A.V. Littledale (Princeton, NJ: Scepter Publishers, Inc., 1996), 16; and Leen, *The Holy Ghost*, 155-56.

⁴² St. Augustine, *Epistola ad Dardanum* [*De Presentia Dei Liber*, cap. V, 16-17], PL 33:837-38, as quoted and translated in John A. Hardon, S.J., *History and Theology of Grace: The Catholic Teaching on Divine Grace* (Ypsilanti, MI: Veritas Press of Ave Maria College, 2002) (cited hereafter as Hardon, *Grace*), 194.

however, there is one special mode belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. And since the rational creature by its operation of knowledge and love attains to God Himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature, but also to dwell therein as in His own temple. So no other effect can be put down as the reason why the divine person is in the rational creature in a new mode, except sanctifying grace. Hence, the divine person is sent, and proceeds temporally only according to sanctifying grace.⁴³

Charles (later Cardinal) Journet expounds the relationship between sanctifying grace and the Divine Indwelling:

Created grace is a *reality*, a quality, a light that enables the soul to receive worthily the indwelling of the three divine Persons. . . . Along with itself grace brings its very source, the Trinity in its entirety, just as the sun itself is given to us in one of its rays. Once there is the state of grace, there is the indwelling of the divine Persons; and once there is this indwelling, it itself produces in the soul that which makes it possible, namely, grace.⁴⁴

Continuing, Journet explains: "The uncreated Gift of the Holy Spirit and created gift of [sanctifying] grace are simultaneous. There are differences of degree in the life of individual souls; but in each of them the intensity of grace and the intensity of the indwelling increase with the same movement."⁴⁵ The *Catechism* implies as much, for it teaches that "by the grace of God, Christians also become temples of the

⁴³ S.T.I, Q. 43, a. 3.

⁴⁴ Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*, 19. Cf. S.T.I, Q. 43, a. 3, ad 2, where St. Thomas says: "Sanctifying grace disposes the soul to possess the divine person"; cf. S.T. I-II, Q. 114, a. 3, ad 3, where he says that "by grace the Holy Ghost dwells in man"; and Fr. Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Glories of Divine Grace: A Fervent Exhortation to All to Preserve and to Grow in Sanctifying Grace*, trans. by Patrick Shaughnessy, O.S.B. (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 2000) (hereafter cited as *Glories of Divine Grace*), chap. 16, "The Entire Holy Trinity Is Introduced Into Our Soul by Grace," 80, who says that "through grace our soul is so splendidly ornamented that God dwells in it as willingly as in Heaven."

⁴⁵ Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*, 26. Likewise, sanctifying grace and the infused theological virtue of charity are never inseparable; "they are always together, either both present or both absent," Hardon, *Grace*, 143. Cf. CCC, nos. 1997; also 1861, 1964 and 1966.

Holy Spirit."⁴⁶ It is through the gift of sanctifying grace, which is a created gift, a quality of the soul,⁴⁷ not a substance but an accidental form,⁴⁸ that we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) and divinized.⁴⁹ The divine nature, as Matthias Scheeben says, "draws our nature to itself, receives it into its Divine Bosom, immerses it into itself as iron is dipped into the furnace."⁵⁰ Through grace we become sharers in the very life of God and are thus deified⁵¹; we become temples of the Holy Spirit, where God dwells within us; and this interior transformation occurs at Baptism.⁵²

The supernatural life of God which sanctifying grace imparts, like natural life, is capable of growth, and the primary means for this growth after Baptism is the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist,⁵³ and prayer. As Fr. John Hardon, S.J.,

⁴⁶ CCC, no. 1197.

⁴⁷ Per Hardon, *Grace*, 137-39. On 137, he says: "The common teaching of theology drawn from authoritative documents of the Church is that sanctifying grace is not the Holy Spirit Himself [a position held by Peter Lombard, Hugh of St. Victor and others, who identified grace with charity and charity with the Holy Spirit (pp. 137-38), but a created gift of God which inheres in the soul as a perduring reality that perfects the spirit of man, not unlike the way his body is informed by the rational soul."

⁴⁸ Hardon, *Grace*, 140, quotes St. Thomas, S.T. II, Q. 110, a. 2, [ad 2], who says that "every substance is either the very nature of a thing whose substance it is, or it is part of the nature, as matter and form are called substances. Now since grace is above human nature, it cannot be a substance or a substantial form; but it is an accidental form of the soul itself. For what is substantially in God, becomes accidentally present in the soul which participates in the divine goodness, as is evident with knowledge."

⁴⁹ Cf. CCC, no. 1988, quoting St. Athanasius, *Ep. ad Serapionem* 1:24, PG 26:585, 588: "[God] gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature. . . . For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized."

⁵⁰ *Glories of Divine Grace*, chap. 5, "Grace Is a Participation in the Uncreated Divine Nature," 21.

⁵¹ "The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying* grace received in Baptism" (CCC, no. 1999).

⁵² "By virtue of our Baptism, . . . the Holy Spirit in the Church communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is offered to us in the Son" (CCC, no. 683).

⁵³ "Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ, a flesh 'given life and giving life through the Holy Spirit,' preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism" (CCC, no. 1392).

points out: "Devotion to prayer and, in fact, the whole gamut of good works performed, helps to merit growth in sanctifying grace and advancement in the soul's nearness to God."⁵⁴ And a deeper partaking of the Divine Indwelling accompanies any increase in grace.

The Divine Indwelling, while revealed in only an obscure way in the Old Testament,⁵⁵ was revealed clearly and explicitly in the New Testament. In addition to the famous Johannine text quoted above (Jn. 14:23), we find many other references to the Divine Indwelling in his other writings; for example, "No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us" (1 Jn. 4:12); and, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). We see the same in St. Paul; for example, "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said: 'I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people'" (2 Cor. 6:16).

In Catholic theology, the Divine Indwelling is often referred to as the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, due to the many scriptural references which speak of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and the fact that the work of sanctification of souls, though in reality a single operation common to the three divine Persons,⁵⁶ is attributed to the Holy Spirit,⁵⁷ who, as the *Catechism* teaches, "communicates to us, intimately and personally, the life that originates in the Father and is

⁵⁴ Hardon, *Grace*, 158.

⁵⁵ E.g., "Then the Creator of all things gave me his command, and he who formed me chose the spot for my tent, saying, 'In Jacob make your dwelling, in Israel your inheritance'" (Sir. 53:8). Biblical quotes are taken from the *New American Bible*, unless otherwise indicated.

⁵⁶ CCC, nos. 258-259.

⁵⁷ Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Divinum Illud Munus*, May 9, 1897, no. 9, available at www.Vatican.va, teaches: "Now this wonderful union, which is properly called 'indwelling,' ... although it is most certainly produced by the presence of the whole Blessed Trinity—'We will come to Him and make our abode with Him' (John 14:23)—nevertheless is attributed in a peculiar manner to the Holy Ghost."

offered to us in the Son."⁵⁸ To again quote St. Paul: "...but now you have had yourselves washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). He exhorts Timothy: "Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us" (2 Tim. 1:14); and in urging the Christians of Corinth to live chaste lives, the Apostle to the Gentiles makes clear that our bodies as well as our souls are temples of the Spirit: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a great price. Therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Because the Holy Spirit is one in essence with the Father and the Son, when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, the Father and Son dwell in us as well, as both St. Paul and St. John make clear. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, St. Paul asks: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"; and in 1 John 4:13, we read: "This is how we know that we remain in [God] and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit."⁵⁹ The great defender of the divinity of Christ (and therefore of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity) at the Council of Nicaea, St. Athanasius (†373), sums up well this teaching, saying that "when the Spirit dwells in us, the Word who bestows the Spirit is in us too, and the Father is present in the Word. This is the meaning of the text: 'My Father and I will come to him and make our home with him [Jn. 14:23].'"⁶⁰ And, as Pope St. John Paul II teaches in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, with sanctifying grace comes the Spirit, and through Him, the Father and the Son:

Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, man enters a "new life," is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a "dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit," a living temple of

⁵⁸ CCC, no. 683. Cf. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4: "The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple."

⁵⁹ Cf. 1 Jn. 3:24: "Those who keep [God's] commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us."

⁶⁰ *Ep. ad Serapionem* 1:30, PG 26:599; Engl. trans. in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, 4 vols. (New York: Catholic Book Pub. Co., 1975-76), 3:585.

God (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19). For through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to him and take up their abode with him (Jn. 14:23).⁶¹

Scripture also reveals that the sending of the Holy Spirit, and the Divine Indwelling that results in those who believe in Jesus and are baptized, is truly the completion of Our Lord's redemptive and salvific work. At the Last Supper, He said: "For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn. 16:7). Father Leen says these words make clear that Jesus

... envisaged the "mission" or the sending of the Holy Ghost by His Father and by Himself, after his return to the bosom of the Father, as the *grand event* to which His whole life was directed. For Him, clearly, it was the crowning circumstance on which converged all those acts culminating in the Passion, which He wrought for the salvation of mankind. This mission, this dispatching from heaven to the souls of men of an ambassador wholly divine in Nature and in Person, was evidently looked forward to by the Saviour as the full fruit of His whole earthly mission and His life work.⁶²

In considering the baptized as temples of the Holy Spirit wherein the Most High God dwells, we must look first to the human nature of Jesus Christ. The *Catechism* teaches: "Christ is the true temple of God, 'the place where his glory dwells'; by the grace of God, Christians also become the temples of the Holy Spirit, living stones out of which the Church is built."⁶³ Jesus is the true temple of God because He is the Eternal Word made flesh, whose sacred humanity is substantially united to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; and in Jesus the Divine Presence dwells in its full perfection, for as St. Paul tells us: "For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily" (Col. 2:9).⁶⁴

But here we must beware. When we speak of the Divine Indwelling or the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in reference to

⁶¹ Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World), May 18, 1986, no. 58, available at www.vatican.va.

⁶² Leen, *The Holy Ghost*, 147-48; cf. also, 166-72.

⁶³ CCC, no. 1197.

⁶⁴ CCC, nos. 515, 2502.

us, we do not mean that there exists a substantial union between our human nature and the Blessed Trinity, as there exists in Jesus Christ with the substantial union between the Second Person of the Trinity who is the uncreated Eternal Word, and Our Lord's created human nature. The Triune God is substantially present in the soul which is in the State of Grace, but not in substantial union with it. As Father Hardon explains, by the Indwelling, the Holy Spirit "is present not only by means of the created gifts of grace, which he dispenses, but by his uncreated divine nature"; however, he goes on to stress that "[t]he personal indwelling does not produce a substantial but only an accidental union with the souls of the just."⁶⁵ Hardon says the Indwelling

... may be compared to the interpenetration of our body by the soul, which is whole and entire in every part of the body and not less in one portion than in another. Analogously God compenetrates every portion of the soul, to the very depths of its being. He is united with the soul by permeating its essence, yet always by a union which is only accidental and not substantial, albeit permanent and habitual and destined to continue for eternity.⁶⁶

Some Effects of the Divine Indwelling

While the Divine Indwelling does not bring about a substantial union between our soul and the Triune God, it nevertheless effects a wonderful change in the soul. Through the Indwelling, we begin to live life in a different mode, a life in the Spirit. As St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "the Spirit changes

⁶⁵ John A. Hardon, S.J., *Modern Catholic Dictionary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1980), s.v., "Indwelling." Cf. Hardon, *Grace*, chap. 5, "Sharing The Divine Nature," 196. Fr. Hardon, in the same chapter 5, *Grace*, 165, points out that Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism have blurred the distinction between God's divine nature and our human nature and have gone to "monistic extremes" in their "longing for divine communion." He says that even in Christian history there has been a tendency on the part of some to go to extremes; see Hardon's discussion in *Grace*, 167-81, where he singles out the errors of the German Dominican mystic, Meister Eckhart (†1327), and others. Simply put, we are not called to enter into a substantial union with God, either in this life or in the next.

⁶⁶ Hardon, *Grace*, 200-01.

those in whom he comes to dwell; he so transforms them that they begin to live a completely new kind of life."⁶⁷ According to Fr. A. M. Henry, O.P.: "To say that [the Father, Son and Holy Spirit] dwell in us or that we receive or possess them is to say that they transform us, that they enlighten our understanding, enkindle our heart, imprint in us the traits of their likeness."⁶⁸ Yves Congar stresses that with the Indwelling, the Holy Spirit becomes "the actual source of our spiritual life, so that it is not easy to distinguish what comes from him and what is ours"; that the Holy Spirit "is so deeply present in the depths of the soul . . . that, in a manner, he performs within us our most personal and inward acts, he prays in us" (Rom. 8:26).⁶⁹ God truly becomes "the mover and ruler of our actions."⁷⁰

No longer does God regard us as mere creatures, or servants; grace and the Divine Indwelling which accompanies it raise us, says Scheeben, "even to a certain equality with God" which establishes us in friendship with Him,⁷¹ because God now "sees Himself in us and can embrace us with the same love with which He loves Himself."⁷² Moreover, the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, His intimate presence in us, gives the soul a participation, more or less remote, in the Divine Perfections.⁷³ By nature there is nothing in us that would move God to love us as He loves Himself, to delight in us as a lover with a beloved. "God can love a thing only insofar as He makes it a partaker of His own goodness and beauty,"⁷⁴ says Scheeben. But through

⁶⁷ *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Lib. 10, 11; PG 74:434; Engl. trans. in *The Liturgy of the Hours* (Lenten Season/Easter Season), 2:991.

⁶⁸ Henry, *The Holy Spirit*, 111.

⁶⁹ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, rev. Eng. ed., trans. from the French (2nd ed.; Dublin: Helicon Press, 1965), 170.

⁷⁰ Antonio Royo, O.P. and Jordan Aumann, O.P., *The Theology of Christian Perfection* (Dubuque, IA: Priory Press, 1962), 48; see their discussion, 49-51. On pp. 46-47, they discuss various theories of the Divine Indwelling.

⁷¹ Jesus says, "I no longer call you servants, but friends" (Jn. 15:15).

⁷² Scheeben, *Glories of Divine Grace*, chap. 21, "God Establishes a True Friendship between God and Man," 116.

⁷³ Leen, *The Holy Ghost*, 157.

⁷⁴ Scheeben, *Glories of Divine Grace*, chap. 23, "The Heavenly Beauty That Grace Gives to the Soul," 130.

our sharing in His divine nature and His dwelling within us, the soul participates in Divine Beauty which makes God delight in us: "Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, ah, you are beautiful" (Song 4:1). To again quote Scheeben: "[O]ur heart acquires through the indwelling of God a splendor great enough to fill God Himself with delight."⁷⁵

St. Paul makes clear that the elevation to the supernatural order by sanctifying grace and the Divine Indwelling effects a divine filiation, making us sons of God, sons in the Son: "God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Therefore now he is not a servant, but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God" (Gal. 4:6-7).⁷⁶ It makes us God's adopted children (Rom. 8:15-17). As Leen explains, after the soul "has been justified in the blood of Christ," the Holy Spirit "begins to exist there in a manner entirely different from the former manner. . . . [so that there is] a new mode of existing there"⁷⁷; and the result is that

God is able to love the souls as He loves Himself, with a love which is of the same nature as that by which the Father loves His Only-Begotten Son. The whole economy of God's dealings with humanity was directed towards this objective—namely, that one day the Almighty could look on His fallen creatures and see them not as such, but as beloved children—sons and heirs, "heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 4:8:17).⁷⁸

Knowing and Loving God in an Elevated State

Theologians also link the Divine Indwelling with a special, intimate knowledge of God and the mysteries of our Faith that far exceeds our natural ability of knowing Him (as the philosophers are able to do), and a deep, abiding love for Him and the things of God that far surpasses our ordinary power of the will.⁷⁹ As St. Thomas Aquinas explains, only creatures with a

⁷⁵ Ibid., chap. 16, "The Entire Holy Trinity Is Introduced into Our Soul by Grace," 81. Cf. the CCC, no. 2024: "Sanctifying grace makes us 'pleasing to God.'"

⁷⁶ Douay-Rheims trans.

⁷⁷ Leen, *The Holy Ghost*, 173-74.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 176. Cf. Royo and Aumann, *Theology of Christian Perfection*, 48-49.

⁷⁹ Hardon, *Grace*, 197-99; *Theology of Christian Perfection*, 46.

rational nature have a capacity for their minds and wills to be elevated in this manner through grace and God dwelling in them:

Other creatures . . . do not attain God in his very person. So, although God is in them [as One who creates, conserves and moves them], they themselves are not with God. But the rational creature attains God himself through grace by knowing and loving him; . . . For this reason we say that it has a capacity for God, that is, a capacity for the good that will perfect it as its Object. Therefore, we call the rational creature the Temple of God, the dwelling place of God.⁸⁰

Intimate knowledge and love of God—as the Triune God who is the object of man's eternal beatitude—is possible only through God dwelling in the soul and bestowing upon it a participation, as Leen puts it, in His own "divine energy." After quoting John 3:5 ("Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"), he says:

The power of thought and of love that we have acquired by our first birth—the birth according to the flesh—cannot even in its highest development carry us beyond the limits of the created universe. Through these powers even if submitted to an independent evolution God could not be known in Himself. Our ideas of Him would be limited to what we could derive from the study of created perfections. We could see Him only in His created works, not in Himself. We could *know something about Him* but we could *not know Him*. To penetrate further, . . . there is needed a new birth, a new generation, in virtue of which we receive a higher nature, equipped with divine powers and faculties—that is, faculties that participate in the divine energy. God can love, with the love with which He loves Himself, only what is divine and God-like; hence, that we be the objects of His loving complacency, we must to some extent be

⁸⁰ I *Sentences*, Dist. 37, Exposition, as quoted in Henry, *The Holy Spirit*, 110. Fr. Hardon, *Grace*, 197, points out that "God's presence as the *object* of a special knowledge and love . . . need not be actual here and now but has at least the capacity for realization, in varying stages. These stages take us from the dawn of reason (and the exercise of faith), through spiritual growth, to the beatific vision." Cf. Scheeben, *Glories of Divine Grace*, chap. 17, "Through Grace the Holy Ghost Breathes His Own Life into Us," 86.

"divinized." That we should love God in Himself, it is required that we participate in the divine energy of loving the divine. It is Jesus Christ Who has merited this "supernature" for us—it is *the Holy Ghost, the giver of all good gifts, who forms it in us*. We are born spiritually of the Holy Spirit. "By whom" (that is, Jesus), "He hath given us great and precious promises: that by these you may be partakers of the divine nature" [2 Pet. 1:1-4].⁸¹

The *Catechism* supports the above statements by teaching that both our share in the Divine life of God, as well as our ability to act on a supernatural level—through the infused virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, through the promptings of the Holy Spirit by the Gifts of the Spirit, and through the infused moral virtues—are all rooted in the gift of sanctifying grace which comes to us at Baptism:

The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.⁸²

Specifically, the supernatural virtues of Faith⁸³ and Charity,⁸⁴ which are infused into our souls along with sanctifying grace

⁸¹ Leen, *The Holy Ghost*, 99-100. Cf. CCC, no. 1998: "The vocation to eternal life is *supernatural*. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of the human intellect and will, as that of every other creature"; CCC, no. 2011: "*The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits* before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men."

⁸² CCC, no. 1266.

⁸³ "Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself" (CCC, no. 1814).

⁸⁴ "Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God" (CCC, no. 1822).

at Baptism, enable us to know God and to love Him in a supernatural manner, far exceeding our natural capacity to know and love Him; for the *Catechism* teaches that God "wants to communicate his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son. By revealing himself, God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and *of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity*" (emphasis added).⁸⁵

And here we come to what Antonio Royo and Jordan Aumann call "the most intimate purpose of the indwelling of the Trinity in our souls," at least in this earthly life: "God himself, one in essence and three in persons, becomes the object of an ineffable experience. The divine Persons are given to us that we may enjoy them." They then quote St. John of the Cross (†1591), who speaks of the "delicacy of the delight which is felt in this touch [from God], [which] is impossible of true description."⁸⁶ Continuing, they say:

In these sublime heights, where the soul experiences the divine indwelling in an ineffable manner, what the soul knew and believed through faith it now experiences as if by sight and touch, as St. Teresa [of Avila] explains:

So that what we hold by faith the soul may be said here to grasp by sight, although nothing is seen by the eyes, either of the body or of the soul; for it is no imaginary vision. Here all three Persons communicate themselves to the soul and speak to the soul and explain to it those words which the gospel attributes to the Lord, namely, that he and the Father and the Holy Ghost will come to dwell with the soul which loves him and keeps his commandments.⁸⁷

We must realize, however, that the Divine Indwelling, no matter how sublime, does not attain its finality in this earthly

⁸⁵ CCC, no. 52. Cf. CCC, no. 2000: "Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, *to act by his love*" (emphasis added).

⁸⁶ Royo and Aumann, *Theology of Christian Perfection*, 51, quoting St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, stanza 2, n. 19.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 52, quoting St. Teresa's *Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansions, chap. 1.

life but rather in the eternal life of Heaven. Father Leen expounds this point:

The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the soul on earth is a direct consequence of grace: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the blessed is a consequence of the "light of glory." The former is, in its essence, the same as the latter, but with the limitations and restrictions that cling to the life of faith. . . . Pope Leo XIII points out this truth in his great encyclical on the Holy Ghost [*Divinum Illud Munus*]. He writes: "This wonderful union which is properly called indwelling differs only in degree or state from that with which God beatifies the saints in heaven." The Beatific Vision is the culminating point of the supernatural life infused into us at baptism. The Beatific Vision has as its immediate and proper effect the "indwelling" of the Blessed Trinity in its perfect and final form. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the just on earth is the Beatific Vision in embryo.⁸⁸

Moreover, St. Paul makes clear that the Divine Indwelling is the basis for our resurrected life in the Kingdom, of our rising on the Last Day with bodies glorified: "If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11).

The Blessed Virgin Mary & the Divine Indwelling

All that has been said about the Divine Indwelling for the souls of the faithful in general holds true in the Blessed Virgin Mary, although with her the Divine Indwelling is unique, for it began in a most exceptional way, at her Immaculate Conception, when "by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the [future] merits of Jesus Christ," she not only was "preserved immune from all stain of original sin"⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Leen, *The Holy Ghost*, 190-91. The quote from Leo XIII's encyclical *Divinum Illud Munus*, May 9, 1897 [no. 9], is available at www.vatican.va. Cf. Père Gardeil, O.P., *The Holy Spirit in the Christian Life* (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1955), 3-4, who stresses that the Christian life "is the personal dwelling of God with the soul, . . . The soul in this state is sort of the seedling of eternity. . . of heaven, of beatitude. This gift is received at baptism; in the little baptized child there is God, substantially present, and by sanctifying grace it is empowered to possess itself of him."

⁸⁹ CCC, 491, quoting Pope Pius IX's Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, [Dec. 8], 1854.

(which we may call the "negative" aspect of her Immaculate Conception); but in addition, God the Father deigned that this woman who would be the Mother of His Son Incarnate "would possess that fullness of holy innocence and sanctity" to such a degree that, as Bl. Pius IX says in his Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, "under God, one cannot even imagine anything greater, and which, outside of God, no mind can succeed in comprehending fully"⁹⁰ (the positive aspect of Mary's Immaculate Conception).

Later in his Apostolic Constitution, Pius IX describes Our Lady as "the only one who has become the dwelling place of all the graces of the most Holy Spirit."⁹¹ Applying the principle enunciated earlier by Journef—that "the intensity of grace and the intensity of the indwelling increase with the same movement"—we can say with certainty that from the first instant of her Conception, the Triune God dwelled in the Blessed Virgin to a such a lofty degree that only God Himself can comprehend it. The Archangel Gabriel could have uttered the initial words of his salutation, "*Kaire, kecharitoméne*" ("Hail, full of grace") (Lk. 1:28), only if the Godhead dwelt in Mary in an incomprehensible fullness—corresponding to her fullness of grace.⁹²

Here we can turn to modern exegesis, which has helped to clarify the meaning of *kecharitoméne* and to bring out the philological richness of this Greek verb, which is probably best translated as "completely and permanently transformed by God's grace."⁹³ Again, acknowledging that the intensity of the Divine Indwelling corresponds to the power of grace, we can

⁹⁰ *Ineffabilis Deus*, in *Pii IX Pontificis Maximi Acta I* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1971), 597-98; Engl. trans. in *Our Lady: Papal Teachings*, ed. Benedictine Monks of Solemnnes, trans. Daughters of St. Paul (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1961), no. 31, p. 61 (hereafter cited as *Our Lady*).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*; Engl. trans. in *Our Lady*, no. 54, p. 77.

⁹² Cf. CCC, no. 490 (which begins the teaching on Mary's Immaculate Conception): "To become the mother of the Savior, Mary 'was enriched with gifts appropriate to such a role.' The angel Gabriel at the moment of the annunciation salutes her as 'full of grace.'"

⁹³ Deyanira Flores, S.T.D., "Mary, the Virgin 'Completely and Permanently Transformed by God's Grace': The Meaning and Implications of Luke 1:28 and of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception for Mary's Spiritual Life," paper presented at

say that from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception Mary was completely and permanently transformed by both grace and the Indwelling of the Holy Trinity. But even though Mary was filled with a superabundance of grace and completely and permanently transformed by God from her conception, she always remained a creature and thus throughout her life could attain a qualitative increase in sanctifying grace—with a corresponding deepening of the Divine Indwelling—by meriting through good works and a life of charity, as well as through her prayer and her reception of Holy Communion.⁹⁴ In fact, because Our Lady was not burdened with the effects of Original Sin, was free of concupiscence,⁹⁵ and remained sinless during her entire life,⁹⁶ she had no obstacles to prevent her from growing in grace. St. John of the Cross insists that Mary from the very beginning of her life was raised to such a high state that she “never had the form of any creature impressed on her soul, nor was she moved by any”; rather, “she was always moved by the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁷ Pope Benedict XVI teaches essentially the same in regard to the Blessed Virgin:

the 55th Annual Meeting of the Mariological Society of America held in Houston, TX., May 19-22, 2004, published in *Marian Studies: The Immaculate Conception, Calling and Destiny* 55 (2004): 87-88. This article offers a scholarly philological analysis of the word *kecharitoméne* and concludes that “the best possible translation” of this word (the perfect passive participle, feminine singular, of the Greek verb χαριτόω [χαριτοῦν] as it appears in the Lucan text) “is probably ‘completely and permanently transformed by God’s grace.’” See Flores’s exposition, 89-102, of how authors throughout Tradition, in their praises of Our Lady, lend support to this proposed translation.

⁹⁴ See Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life*, trans. Bernard J. Kelly, C.S.Sp. (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1993), 45-46, esp. 87-122. On pp. 99-103, he explains how and why Mary underwent a wonderful increase in grace at the Incarnation.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57: Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange explains that because Mary was never in any sense subject to concupiscence, “[t]here could be no disordered movement of her sensitive nature, no escape of her sensibility from the previous control of reason and will. Her sensibility was always fully subject to her rational powers, and thereby to God’s Will, as obtained in the state of original innocence. . . . Similarly, Mary was never subject to error or illusion. Her judgment was always enlightened and correct. . . .”

⁹⁶ CCC, no. 493: “By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long.”

⁹⁷ St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. III, chap. 2, no. 10, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio

In her there was no obstacle, no screen, nothing that separated her from God. This is the meaning of her being without original sin: her relation with God was free from even the slightest flaw; there is no separation, there is not a shadow of selfishness, but perfect harmony; her small human heart is perfectly "centered" in the great heart of God.⁹⁸

In light of the foregoing, we may draw a number of conclusions. First, Our Lady's words to Sister Mary Ephrem, "I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within," are a most fitting complement to her now-famous words spoken to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes almost one hundred years earlier, "I am the Immaculate Conception." These two phrases reflect the deep and complementary theological truths regarding the Blessed Virgin: She is the Immaculate Conception, filled with, and completely and permanently transformed by, the grace of Christ from the very first moment of her existence; and she is the living tabernacle of the Holy Trinity in whom the Most High God has dwelt in a singular and extraordinary manner from the first instant of her Conception.

Second, Our Lady, completely and permanently transformed by grace and the Indwelling of the Trinity from her Conception, was the perfect mystic: She was always totally detached from earthly things and at all times gave herself fully and unreservedly to God, for she was always moved, and only moved, by her Divine Spouse, the Holy Spirit. Moreover, at all times she responded perfectly to His movements, to the

Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979), 217. Cf. St. Lawrence Justinian (†1455), Archbishop of Venice, who says: "How entirely blessed was the mind of the Virgin which, through the indwelling and guidance of the Spirit, was always and in every way open to the power of the Word of God. She was not led by her own senses, nor by her own will; thus she accomplished outwardly through her body what wisdom from within gave to her faith," *Sermo 8, In festo Purificationis B.M.V. Opera*, 2 (Venitiis 1751), 38-39; Eng. trans. in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, 3:1445, for the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Saturday following the Second Sunday after Pentecost.

⁹⁸ Act of Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Occasion of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (in the Piazza di Spagna), Dec. 8, 2012, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121208_immacolata_en.html.

actual graces He imparted to her. Therefore sanctifying grace, and the Divine Indwelling which accompanied it, grew and deepened in Our Lady throughout her life by leaps and bounds, exponentially as it were, to a marvelous degree truly incomprehensible to us, by means of her life of ardent charity, most fervent prayer, and constant good works, which were the result of her perfect correspondence to the actual graces that the Holy Spirit bestowed upon her, as well as by her reception of Our Lord's Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Infinite Charity.

Moreover, we can relate Our Lady's words both to St. Bernadette ("I am the Immaculate Conception") and to Sister Mary Ephrem ("I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling"), and the truths they contain, to her Immaculate Heart. Significantly, on February 11, 1958, the one hundredth anniversary of her first appearance to St. Bernadette, Our Lady told Sister Mary Ephrem: "My heart, my Immaculate Heart, is the channel through which the graces of the Sacred Heart are given to men." Thus, we may conclude that Mary's Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart is the perfect symbol not only of her ineffable fullness of and complete transformation by grace from her Conception, in which grace she continued to qualitatively grow and deepen throughout her earthly life, but also of the Divine Indwelling which began at her Conception and continued to intensify within her in direct correspondence with the increase of the grace of Christ. Furthermore, Our Lady's words regarding her Immaculate Heart are a heavenly confirmation of the sublime truth revealed in Scripture and Tradition: that she—and her Heart, which is the most perfect symbol of her interior life—is the Mediatrix, the aqueduct or channel, through which the grace of Christ flows from His Sacred Heart to us, and through which the Divine Indwelling which accompanies that grace is accomplished within us and effects our sanctification.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ During his 2007 apostolic journey to Brazil, Pope Benedict XVI, in a homily on May 11 at Mass at the Campo de Marte in São Paulo celebrating the canonization of Anthony of St. Anne Galvão, O.F.M., confirms in clear and concise terms what has been taught in Tradition regarding Our Lady's role in the mediation of grace: that beginning

Fr. Francisco Juberías, C.M.F., offers this profound insight regarding the meaning of the Divine Indwelling within the Virgin Mother as it pertains by extension to us, given that she is our spiritual Mother in order of grace and the loving associate of Christ in His redemptive Sacrifice:

Not only has the Most Holy Trinity come to dwell in our souls through the Heart of Mary, but It dwells in them *with* the same Immaculate Heart. She can never be excluded, but having served as a means and aqueduct for the Most Holy Trinity to come to us, she remains in us together with the same Most Holy Trinity; because she never hinders, but on the contrary, God has desired always to have need of her, making her a faithful collaborator of His designs in all the work of the Redemption. And the communication of grace in every soul and the attaining for each soul of this grace and life of God to its ultimate perfection, is the most necessary office in Her mission as Mother and as Coredemptrix.

But still we have not said everything. Not only has the Most Holy Trinity come to dwell in our souls by means of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and dwells in us *with* the same Immaculate Heart, but the three divine Persons make themselves present in us having their dwelling, their throne and their palace *in* the same Most Holy Heart. God never departs from this divine Sacrament when He communicates Himself to souls, but He communicates Himself to them in It, dwelling always in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as the brilliance dwells and shows itself in the crystal of the diamond and as color and perfume give themselves in the petals of the rose.¹⁰⁰

Authors speak of the unique Indwelling of the divine Persons in the Virgin Mary.¹⁰¹ Fr. Joaquín Alonso, C.M.F., says

with the fall of Adam, *all* the salvific grace of Christ has come and continues to come to the members of the human race through Mary's motherly intercession. Benedict said: "There is no fruit of grace in the history of salvation that does not have as its necessary instrument the meditation of Our Lady," available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_benxvi_hom_20070511_canonization-brazil_en.html, no. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Francisco Juberías, C.M.F., *El corazón de María, tabernáculo de la Trinidad: breves anotaciones sobre el carácter trinitario de la espiritualidad cordimariana* (Madrid: Filación Cordimariana, Gaztambide, [1982?]), 52-53.

¹⁰¹ For an indepth discussion of this topic, see Joachim M. Alonso, C.M.F., "Relationes immaculati cordis B. M. Virginis ad personas SS. mae Trinitatis," in *Alma Socia Christi*:

that God the Father dwelled in Mary's Heart in a singular way in order to impart to her a share in His own paternity and thus enable her to actively cooperate in the Incarnation.¹⁰² Of the Son's Indwelling, Alonso points to the thought of the Fathers, that the Word began to dwell in the Heart of the Blessed Virgin before she conceived Him bodily and that this "altogether supernatural and mystical presence in the Heart of Mary increased more and more daily"; in addition, He was bodily present at the Incarnation.¹⁰³ And Alonso asserts that the Divine Indwelling is said in reference "most properly of the Holy Spirit, of whom the Church prays: 'You [Father] who have prepared in the Heart of the Most Blessed Virgin a worthy dwelling of the Holy Spirit,'" given that the Spirit "so adorns our Queen and Lady with His gifts in order that her interior life may be fully deified in mystical consummation."¹⁰⁴ In regard to the unique Indwelling of the divine Persons in the Virgin Mary, Father Juberías stresses that "one cannot forget that this communication gravitates totally toward Christ and it has Christ as its center," and that "without diminishing the Trinitarian character of Marian Heart spirituality one iota, it is a spirituality eminently Christocentric, because Christ is its very foundation."¹⁰⁵

The singular nature of the Divine Indwelling in the Blessed Virgin helps to clarify her attestation to Sister Mary Ephrem: "I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within." Of all God's creatures made in His image and likeness, Mary is set before us as the perfect model to

Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani in Romae anno sancto 1950 celebrati (13 vols.; Rome: Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1952), 6/fasc. 2, *De corde immaculato B. V. Mariae*, 54-81; see also Juberías, *El corazón de María*.

¹⁰² Ibid., 78; cf. Juberías, *El corazón de María*, 15.

¹⁰³ Ibid. [Alonso and Juberías].

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. [Alonso and Juberías]. N.B.: "At inhabitatio proprissima tandem ratione dicitur et est de Spiritu Sancto, de quo orat Ecclesia: 'qui in Corde B. M. Virginis dignum Spiritus Sancti habitaculum praeparasti.' Ipse suis ita ornat donis ut vita interior nostrae reginae ac dominae sit plene deificata in consummatione mystica." N.B.: The quotation "qui in Corde . . ." is from the Collect of the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which appears in both the 1962 and 1970 Missals.

¹⁰⁵ Juberías, *El corazón de María*, 15.

imitate—in holiness, in love of God and neighbor, in prayer and good works, and in responding humbly and obediently to God's will in all things. The foundation for Our Lady's singular holiness is her ineffable fullness of grace and corresponding intensity of the Indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in her soul from the first instant of her Immaculate Conception—the reality of which the Blessed Virgin was always cognizant and which in turn was an occasion for her continuous state of deep contemplation during the whole of her earthly life.

And it is precisely here that Mary may serve as a model for us, as well as a reminder that our own holiness finds its basis in the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls, a truth which we should reflect upon continuously in our attempts to maintain a recollected state in the midst of our daily duties. Our Lady herself said as much to Sister Mary Ephrem. Recall that on February 11, 1958, the Virgin made known to Sister that she had a special interest in the youth of America, that a knowledge of the Divine Indwelling should be instilled in them and that they must make "a serious study of It, living It in such a way that the Divine Presence becomes, as it were, an intimate and necessary part of their life and daily living."¹⁰⁶ And in a message decades later, Our Lady instructed:

The Presence of the [T]rinity within every human being is the focal point, the basis of interior holiness. From this will spring a deep life of prayer and a love for penance as the discipline needed to convert all peoples to a serious preparation for the coming of my Son and His Kingdom. . . . You must try to make my people understand that the Life of God within them is the source of their peace and happiness. There is no other way. This is what my Son came to teach and bring and it was for this He lived and died. Unless this mystery of God's Presence within is accepted and lived, peace will not come. It is the only way, believe me, my daughter.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ *OLA*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ Message of July 18, 1980, in *OLA*, "Messages from Our Lady of America 4/4/60—1/23/81," 37.

The "Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity," which was composed by Sister Mary Ephrem, communicates most beautifully the deep mystery of the Triune God who takes up His abode within us when we are baptized and receive sanctifying grace, and the need for us to reflect constantly on the ineffable reality of God dwelling within us:

O my Love, my only Good, Most Holy Trinity, I adore You, hidden in the depths of my soul. To You, to Your honor and glory, I dedicate my life. May every thought, word and deed of mine be an act of adoration and praise directed towards Your Divine Majesty enthroned in my heart.

O Father, Infinite Goodness, behold Your child, clothed in the likeness of Your Son. Extend to me Your arms that I may belong to You forever.

O Son, Divine Lord, made man, crucify me with Yourself that I may become, in union with You, a sacrifice of praise for the glory of Your Father.

O Holy Spirit, Fire of Everlasting Love, consume me on the altar of Divine Charity, that at the end of life, nothing may remain but that which bears the likeness of Christ.

O Blessed Trinity, worthy of all adoration, I wish to remain in spirit on my knees, to acknowledge forever Your reign in me and over me, to Your everlasting glory.

Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the pure heart of St. Joseph, I consecrate my life to Your adoration and glory.

At the moment of death, receive me, O my Triune Love, that I may continue my adoration of love through all eternity. Amen.¹⁰⁸

In our day, when we see unprecedented attacks on the family through a sex-saturated culture and the proliferation of pornography, and a social media along with the State apparently

¹⁰⁸ OLA, 48, states that on Jan. 25, 1963, this prayer was granted a *nihil obstat* by Daniel Pilarczyk, S.T.D., and an *imprimatur* by Fr. Paul F. Leibold, then Vicar General. Sister Mary Ephrem's diary gives no date of composition for this prayer. But "True Story" Part IV, The National Shrine, 5 (unnumbered) states that on May 1, 1960, Bishop Leibold approved the medal with the image of Our Lady of America, and that he "designed the prayer pamphlet to go with the medal. It contained the Prayer to the Immaculate Conception and the Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity." Thus, we may conclude that the Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity was composed some time before May 1, 1960.

bent on eliminating any and all moral boundaries, there is a dire need to embrace a life of purity, as urged by Our Lady through Sister Mary Ephrem. The very essence of the messages is that purity is a necessary precondition to safeguard the Indwelling of the Trinity in our souls, which is our greatest and most precious gift; it is a prerequisite to preserve God's life in our souls and to attain Heaven, our final goal.

Recent Manifestations of Devotion to Our Lady of America and Its Message

In recent decades there have been renewed efforts to make better known the messages of Our Lady of America.¹⁰⁹ For example, in 1992, a statue of Our Lady of America was sculpted according to specifications given by Sister Mary Ephrem, which was carried by youth at World Youth Day papal Masses from 1993 through 2008, and was processed at celebrations at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1994 and 2001.¹¹⁰ Those who have promoted the devotion include Mother Angelica on the Eternal Word Television Network; Michael Brown (of www.spiritdaily.com), who in 2000 featured a number of articles on his website; and the Pilgrims of St. Michael, based in Canada, who published articles on Our Lady of America in various editions of *The Michael Journal* and have distributed over 30,000 copies to participants at the March for Life in Washington, D.C., in January 2004 and 2005.¹¹¹ On February 19, 2006, a statue of Our Lady of America was processed in Saint Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne, Wyoming, at which time Most Rev. David L. Ricken, then Bishop of Cheyenne, preached on the

¹⁰⁹ For a listing of various individuals, groups and events that have promoted devotion to Our Lady of America, see "True Story," Part VI, Promotion of the Devotion, at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.com/truestory.php> (which covers the years 1988 through 2008), and "News Pertaining to Our Lady of America," available at <http://ourladyofamerica.org/news.php> (which covers the years 2006 through 2013).

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Fr. Lional Pare and the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima had extended the invitation for the statue to be brought.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

messages and the devotion.¹¹² On May 31, 2006, the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate enthroned a statue of Our Lady of America at the Eternal Word Television Network headquarters in Hanceville, Alabama¹¹³; and on November 13, 2006, at a Mass during the meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, Maryland, then Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis blessed a new statue depicting Our Lady of America.¹¹⁴ Prayer cards with this new image of Our Lady of America have been printed and widely distributed; on the back side of the card is printed the "Prayer to Our Lady of America, Patroness of Our Land."¹¹⁵ And, as noted earlier, on May 31, 2007, in a letter to his fellow U.S. Bishops, Archbishop Raymond Burke issued a canonical opinion stating that Archbishop Leibold and other Bishops over the years both approved and actively promoted the devotion to Mary under the title Our Lady of America.¹¹⁶ In September, 2011, a multi-part series explaining the messages of Our Lady of America was videotaped by the Apostolate of Family Consecration in Steubenville, Ohio, which can be viewed via Internet and through a DVD recording.¹¹⁷

¹¹² "Our Lady of America Enthroned in St. Mary's Cathedral by Bishop David L. Ricken February 19, 2006," available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/Cheyenne.php>. At this link one can view Bishop Ricken's homily.

¹¹³ "The Blessed Virgin Mary & Immaculate Co-Redemptrix Enthroned as Our Lady of America!"—available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/OLAM-05-31-2006.php>. Public processions were planned on Marian feasts.

¹¹⁴ "New Statue of Our Lady of America," available at http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/USCCB_11_13_06.php.

¹¹⁵ Below the prayer on the back side of a prayer card which this author obtained, one reads: Missionary Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 144 Sheldon Road St. Albans, VT 05478 USA, 802-524-1300, email JKMI@JKMI.com, website www.JKMI.com. A duplication of this image appears at the end of this paper.

¹¹⁶ "Canonical Approval," available at <http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/Approval.php>.

¹¹⁷ See "Our Lady of America Newsletter, September 12, 2011, Feast of the Holy Name of Mary," available at http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/Sep09_13_2011_newsletter.html. The series can also be viewed through the Apostolate of Family Consecration website at www.familyland.org, and it is available on DVD from Ignatius Press.

Unfortunately, in years past a dispute over the copyright regarding the messages to Sister Mary Ephrem and the trademark for the image of Our Lady of America inhibited efforts to make the messages better known. But a recent federal court decision has ruled that the messages, and the image, may be disseminated.¹¹⁸ Let us pray that the messages granted by Our Lady of America, which are truly needed in our land at this present moment in history and which complement beautifully the messages given by Our Lady at Fatima, may become widely known and embraced by the faithful.

Prayer to the Immaculate Conception

O Immaculate Mother, Queen of our Country, open our hearts, our homes, and our Land to the coming of Jesus, your Divine Son. With Him, reign over us, O heavenly Lady, so pure and so bright with the radiance of God's light shining in and about you. Be our Leader against the powers of evil set upon wresting the world of souls, redeemed at such a great cost by the sufferings of your Son and of yourself, in union with Him, from that same Savior, Who loves us with infinite charity.

We gather about you, O chaste and holy Mother, Virgin Immaculate, Patroness of our beloved Land, determined to fight under your banner of holy purity against the wickedness that would make all the world an abyss of evil, without God and without your loving maternal care.

We consecrate our hearts, our homes, our Land to your Most Pure Heart, O great Queen, that the kingdom of your Son our Redeemer and our God, may be firmly established in us.

¹¹⁸ In the case of Kevin B. McCarthy, et al. v. Patricia Ann Fuller, a/k/a Sister Joseph Therese, et al., after a jury verdict in favor of plaintiffs (McCarthy), the Federal District Court of the Southern District of Indiana entered an amended judgment on Sept. 18, 2014, declaring that the messages given to Sister Mary Ephrem as published in the 1960 and 1971 booklets, and the image of Our Lady of America, are in the public domain, and that all devotional materials such as booklets, and prayer cards and medals with images of Our Lady of America do not infringe on any trademark and may be distributed freely; see <http://www.ourladyofamerica.org/pdf/856%20Amended%20Judgment.pdf>.

We ask no special sign of you, sweet Mother, for we believe in your great love for us, and we place in you our entire confidence. We promise to honor you by faith, love, and the purity of our lives according to your desire.

Reign over us, then, O Virgin Immaculate, with your Son Jesus Christ. May His Divine Heart and your most chaste Heart be ever enthroned and glorified among us. Use us, your children of America, as your instruments in bringing peace among men and nations. Work your miracles of grace in us, so that we may be a glory to the Blessed Trinity, Who created, redeemed, and sanctifies us.

May your valiant Spouse, St. Joseph, with the holy Angels and Saints, assist you and us in "renewing the face of the earth." Then when our work is over, come, Holy Immaculate Mother, and as our Victorious Queen, lead us to the eternal kingdom, where your Son reigns forever as King. Amen.

(Written at the behest of Our Lady, October 5, 1956.)¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ OLA, 47.



*Prayer card with image of Our Lady of America
(featuring a new statue)*



*The medal of Our Lady of America, including the picture of Our Lady on one side
and the Coat of Arms of the Christian Family on the other (OLA, 47)¹²⁰*

¹²⁰ Archbishop Raymond Burke, in his May 31, 2007, letter to the U.S. Bishops regarding Our Lady of America, explains: "The coat of arms symbolically represents the substance of the private revelation received by Sister Mary Ephrem, namely, the Indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the Christian home, which is the source of life and unity in the family. The coat of arms points to the purity and selflessness of love in the family, because of the Indwelling of the Holy Trinity, the model of which is the Mother of God, under her title of the Immaculate Conception, patroness of our nation. In a particular way, Our Lady of America expressed her desire that the United States of America, through her intercession, be devoted to the purity of love. She identified herself to Sister Mary Ephrem as 'Our Lady of America, The Immaculate Virgin.'"