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## Marian 'Spiritual Attitude' and Marian Piety

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## MARIAN ‘SPIRITUAL ATTITUDE’ AND MARIAN PIETY

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*Patricia A. Sullivan, PhD*

As *Marialis Cultus*<sup>1</sup> would seem to assert, ideally Marian spirituality and Marian devotion are united, yet they are distinct. Pope Paul VI wrote of a Marian “spiritual attitude”<sup>2</sup> that Mary is “a most excellent exemplar of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ, that is, of that interior disposition with which the Church, the beloved spouse, closely associated with her Lord, invokes Christ and through Him worships the eternal

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<sup>1</sup> Paul VI, Pope, *Marialis Cultus* (MC) (2 February 1974), available from the Vatican, at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19740202\\_marialis-cultus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19740202_marialis-cultus_en.html) (accessed 20 October 2013).

<sup>2</sup> MC, 16.

Father.”<sup>3</sup> Humble handmaid of the Lord (Lk. 1:38), she is “a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians.”<sup>4</sup> Of “exercises of piety,” constituting “different forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin,” he wrote that “love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other.”<sup>5</sup> She is the woman whom “the faithful honor [as] the Mother of the Lord” in whose fiat, in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, “mankind begins its return to God,” recognizing “in the glory of the all-holy Virgin the goal towards which it is journeying.”<sup>6</sup>

The distinction between Marian spirituality and Marian devotion perhaps serves God’s appeal to differing human sensibilities that might elicit greater practice of one or the other now, but finally result in their perfect union. Our adoption of the “spiritual attitude” of Mary<sup>7</sup> in reference to Christ will lead to Marian piety that acknowledges his triumph first and efficaciously for all in her, the instrument of the Incarnation, and, vice versa, in Marian devotion we

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., cf. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG), 63: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 57 (1965): 64, and II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), 7: AAS 56 (1964): 100–101.

<sup>4</sup> MC, 21.

<sup>5</sup> MC, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> MC, 16.

will not fail to see persuasively in Mary the proper posture of the human person toward our Maker. But today, while all Christians might see themselves as bidden to cultivate a Marian spirituality according to the description taken from Paul VI, it would seem that Marian devotion is not always as valued, despite its vibrancy in parts of the Church. Thus, the distinction may seem more pronounced—as even a separation—than it was when the Pope issued his Marian apostolic exhortation.

After a swift reduction in attention to Mary following the Second Vatican Council, in recent decades theological and pastoral interest in her has revived, encouraged by the significant Marian papal documents issued even since *Marialis Cultus*. However, the Church's tradition of devotion to Mary, and to the saints, still exists seemingly “anonymously” in the consciousness of many, even at the official, corporate level where all members participate in it. It is a curiosity that the Marian devotion of every pope since Vatican II is scarcely noted except in “traditionally” Catholic quarters. Inattention, except by a small group, to Pope Francis's recent consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a striking example of this. Other of his actions, official as well as private, have received wide attention, as the emphases in his still new pontificate are absorbed. Why is this so? Might the widely vibrant Marian devotion recommended by *Marialis Cultus* yet be realized?

Pope Paul VI submitted that “every authentic development of Christian worship is necessarily followed by

a fitting increase of veneration for the Mother of the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> To pursue this line of reflection, definitions of Marian spirituality and Marian devotion will be studied. Then, accompanying an outline of Paul VI’s direction in each of his guideline areas for Marian devotion (Bible, liturgy, ecumenism, and anthropology), examples of trends that may be related to a depression in Marian devotion will be reviewed along with movements and methods that may renew devotion and indeed may already be doing so. In conclusion, a parting thought will be offered on Marian devotion and Marian spirituality in eschatological perspective.

### **Definitions: Distinctions of Marian Spirituality and Marian Devotion**

Pope Paul VI offered helpful perspective for defining terms that appear elsewhere without precision. “Marian spirituality” and “Marian devotion” cannot be synonymous, as some vague descriptions allow, if Marian spirituality refers to the spirituality *of* Mary rather than to a spirituality *about* Mary. Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote of Marian spirituality as transcending types of spiritualities and devotions and specific states and styles of life. Mary’s “radical renunciation of any special spirituality other than the overshadowing of the Most High and the indwelling of the divine Word” means that “she resolves all particular

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<sup>8</sup> MC, Introduction.

spiritualities into the one spirituality of the bride of Christ, the Church,”<sup>9</sup> he explained. She focused upon the “‘thing itself,’ the gospel of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> Following *Marialis Cultus*, Marian spirituality may properly be understood as that “spiritual attitude” of which Mary is the “model,” “with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, “Mary is above all the example of that worship that consists in making one’s life an offering to God.”<sup>12</sup> Marian devotion is “the piety of the faithful and their veneration of the Mother of God [that] has taken on many forms according to circumstances of time and place, the different sensibilities of peoples and their different cultural traditions.”<sup>13</sup> Paul VI wrote of the piety of the universal Church:

The honor which the Church has always and everywhere shown to the Mother of the Lord, from the blessing with which Elizabeth greeted Mary (cf. Lk 1:42–45) right up to the expressions of praise and petition used today, is a very strong witness to the Church’s norm of prayer and an invitation to become more deeply conscious

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<sup>9</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, vol. I: *The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A. V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 218; orig. ed., *Verbum Caro, Skizzen zur Theologie I* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>11</sup> MC, 16.

<sup>12</sup> MC, 21.

<sup>13</sup> MC, 24.

of her norm of faith. The Church's norm of faith requires that her norm of prayer should everywhere blossom forth with regard to the Mother of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

As expressions of devotion, “exercises of piety,”<sup>15</sup> the pope recommended Marian devotions to be practiced in careful concert with the liturgy and as appropriate to the life of Christians in the modern world.<sup>16</sup> Devotions can deepen Marian devotion itself and assist in the development of Marian spirituality. Many would argue that, absent devotions, Marian devotion could languish. Notably, Pope Paul VI's enthusiasm for private devotions included communal practice of these.<sup>17</sup> His encouragement of family recitation of the rosary is strikingly detailed, with regard to its role in nurturing the “character” of the “domestic Church.”<sup>18</sup>

A lengthy passage of *Marialis Cultus* outlines the breadth of Marian devotion:

It is also important to note how the Church expresses in various effective attitudes of devotion the many relationships that bind her to Mary: in profound veneration, when she reflects on the singular dignity of the Virgin who, through the action of the Holy Spirit has

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<sup>14</sup> MC, 56.

<sup>15</sup> MC, 29, 31, Part Three subheading, and elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> MC, 40–55.

<sup>17</sup> MC, 52–54.

<sup>18</sup> MC, 52.

become Mother of the Incarnate Word; in burning love, when she considers the spiritual motherhood of Mary towards all members of the Mystical Body; in trusting invocation, when she experiences the intercession of her advocate and helper; in loving service, when she sees in the humble handmaid of the Lord the queen of mercy and the mother of grace; in zealous imitation, when she contemplates the holiness and virtues of her who is ‘full of grace’ (Lk 1:28); in profound wonder, when she sees in her, “as in a faultless model, that which she herself wholly desires and hopes to be”; in attentive study, when she recognizes in the associate of the Redeemer, who already shares fully in the fruits of the Paschal Mystery, the prophetic fulfillment of her own future, until the day on which, when she has been purified of every spot and wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27), she will become like a bride arrayed for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ (cf. Rev 21:2).<sup>19</sup>

Correlating these “attitudes of devotion” (“profound veneration,” “burning love,” “trusting invocation,” “loving service,” “zealous imitation,” “profound wonder,” and “attentive study”) with the roles of the saints (companion, model, and intercessor) given in Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* and also promulgated by Pope Paul VI, imitation and invocation, as common concrete expressions of eminent love for and veneration of Mary, become particularly notable

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<sup>19</sup> MC, 22; cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 62: AAS 57 (1965): 63, and II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964): 125.



and effectively may sum up devotion.<sup>20</sup> Mary and the saints have been “venerated ... with special devotion” as the Church “has piously implored the aid of their intercession” and as they have received “the pious devotion and imitation of the faithful,” as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church reminds.<sup>21</sup> The *Marialis Cultus* descriptions show that the devotional attitudes are interconnected. (“Profound wonder” involves acknowledging Mary as “a faultless model.” “Loving service” also presumably involves following the recognized example of Mary. “Attentive study,” leading to appreciation of Mary’s role in our redemption, surely would involve “burning love” and perhaps “profound veneration,” which might issue in imitation and invocation.) The *Lumen Gentium* emphases appear in the conclusion of *Marialis Cultus*, where Paul VI wrote, in reference to devotion, of Mary’s “special position,” her “shining example,” and her “unceasing and efficacious intercession” which “draws her close to those who ask her help.”<sup>22</sup>

Imitation, alongside invocation of our companion Mary, is of particular interest with respect to the relationship between Marian devotion and Marian spirituality. For, because no Christian can fail to see Mary’s unique place in

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<sup>20</sup> Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (21 Nov. 1964), available from the Vatican, at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (accessed 20 October 2013), chap. 7, esp. nos. 50–51.

<sup>21</sup> LG, 50.

<sup>22</sup> MC, 56.

God's salvific plan, it is difficult to imagine that, in the development of the spirituality of Mary, perfected disciple of Christ, Mary herself would not function as a guide. Imitation of Mary in a broad sense would therefore be practiced even by those not given to devotion(s) as well as by those from theological traditions rejecting such, especially when invocation is involved. It registers as devotion in the degree to which it is in thoughtful view of Mary's unique role in Christ's mission. Popularly today, devotion can be equated, reductively, only with devotions that often involve invocation centrally; imitation linked to them is not always appreciated in itself as a devotional attitude. *Marialis Cultus* itself focuses extensively upon the Marian prayer traditions that have been viewed principally as of the intercessory tradition of veneration. But Pope Paul VI wrote at length and insightfully about their benefits, even beyond "the elements of praise and petition,"<sup>23</sup> stressing their Christological character<sup>24</sup> and therefore their intrinsic connection to the worship of God.<sup>25</sup> They move us to "[c]ontemplation in communion with Mary,"<sup>26</sup> "helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> MC, 47.

<sup>24</sup> MC, 41, 45–49.

<sup>25</sup> MC, 41, 48, 56, and elsewhere.

<sup>26</sup> MC, 49a.

<sup>27</sup> MC, 47.

He asserted: “This contemplation by its very nature encourages practical reflection and provides stimulating norms for living.”<sup>28</sup> Devotions inspire imitation of Mary, in other words, even as they might intensify invocation and other devotional “attitudes.” *Marialis Cultus* names the most popular Marian devotion, the rosary, a “Gospel prayer,” “an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the angel’s announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist.”<sup>29</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, in reflection upon Marian biblical and theological themes, notes that Mary is honored for the “union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation,”<sup>30</sup> for her “freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience.”<sup>31</sup> The saints’ roles of companion, model, and intercessor have distinction in Mary who “belongs to the offspring of Adam” and “is one with all those who are to be saved.”<sup>32</sup> Yet, “fully conformed to her Son,”<sup>33</sup> Mary “is hailed as a pre-eminent and singular member of the Church, and as its type and excellent exemplar in faith and charity”<sup>34</sup> as well as

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<sup>28</sup> MC, 49a.

<sup>29</sup> MC, 46.

<sup>30</sup> LG, 57.

<sup>31</sup> LG, 56.

<sup>32</sup> LG, 53.

<sup>33</sup> LG, 59.

<sup>34</sup> LG, 53.

“Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix” of “Christ the one Mediator.”<sup>35</sup>

An interplay of Marian devotion and Marian spirituality, then, results both from that which they share (minimally consciousness of Mary’s perfect discipleship, eliciting imitation in the forms of the devotional “attitude” of imitation and/or progress in the spiritual “attitude” that does imitate her) and from that which distinguishes one from the other (whether the “attitude” is *about* Mary or *of* her, although each of these always has its genesis and terminus in Christ). And so, on the one hand, the wide scope of Marian devotion as outlined by Paul VI allows that devotion might be present in some degree even where it is not the conscious aim. So, too, all Christians are presumably open to Marian spirituality according to the definition gleaned from *Marialis Cultus*. On the other hand, the distinction between Marian devotion and Marian spirituality may permit a significant distance from one to the other, and even if both are present it is possible for one to register more strongly than the other from time to time, group to group, person to person. Yet growth in one might increase the other. Again, devotion, and its expression in devotions, might enhance Marian spirituality. And adoption of the disposition of Mary can increase devotion. Marian devotion with its various

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<sup>35</sup> LG, 62; cf. Leo XIII, Litt. Encycl. *Adiutricem populi*, 5 sept. 1895: ASS 15 (1895–96): 303; S. Pius X, Litt. Encycl. *Ad diem illum*, 2 febr. 1904: Acta, I, p. 154; Denzinger, 1978 a (3370); Pius XI, Litt. Encycl. *Miserentissimus*, 8 maii 1928: AAS 20 (1928): 178; Pius XII, *Nuntius Radioph*, 13 maii 1946: AAS 38 (1946): 266; and S. Ambrosius, *Epist.* 63, PL 16:1218.

expressions (“devotions”) and Marian spirituality are, while distinct, directed to the same goal of growth in discipleship of and transformation by Christ. Pope Paul VI reminded that “the ultimate purpose of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to glorify God and to lead Christians to commit themselves to a life which is in absolute conformity with His will.”<sup>36</sup> This was of course the life of Mary.

The different sensibilities that might incline particular individuals at particular times toward either Marian spirituality or Marian devotion might result from multiple factors largely summarized (pertinently to this reflection that will consider academic theology in relation to Marian matters) by Bernard Lonergan’s description in *Method in Theology* of the bases of theological differences. Lonergan explained that:

Christian theologians disagree not only on the areas relevant to theological research but also on the interpretation of texts, on the occurrence of events, on the significance of movements. Such differences can have quite different grounds. Some may be eliminated by further progress in research, interpretation, history, and they can be left to the healing office of time. Some may result from developmental pluralism: there exist disparate cultures and diverse differentiations of consciousness; and such differences are to be bridged by working out the suitable transposition from one culture to another or from one differentiation of consciousness to

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<sup>36</sup> MC, 39.

another. Others, finally, arise because intellectual or moral or religious conversion has not occurred.<sup>37</sup>

Dispositions of our unique personalities also are undoubtedly factors in spirituality and devotion. It should also be emphasized that both Marian spirituality and Marian devotion involve the intellect and affection as well as volition; although sometimes one of these consciousnesses or faculties is asserted as more critical than the others, either for spiritual or for devotional “attitudes.” As Lonergan’s thought can suggest, conversion in each of these dimensions of our existence does not necessarily occur by a uniform pattern from person to person or, by extension, from group to group.

Paul VI’s assertions in *Marialis Cultus*, leading to a conclusion that a Marian devotion and a Marian spirituality might reciprocally condition and promote each other to fullness naturally, are most pointedly extensive regarding devotion, his topic. Concerning the theology of Marian devotion, he directed that “it is supremely fitting that exercises of piety directed towards the Virgin Mary should clearly express the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them.” Christian worship is offered “to the Father through Christ in the Spirit.” And “[f]rom this point of view worship is rightly extended, though in a substantially different way, first and foremost and in a

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<sup>37</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 150–151. Lonergan noted “these differences can be brought out into the open so that men of good will can discover one another.”

special manner, to the Mother of the Lord and then to the saints, in whom the Church proclaims the Paschal Mystery, for they have suffered with Christ and have been glorified with him.”<sup>38</sup> Notably, among exhortations to Marian devotion since then, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, in reflection upon the presentation of Mary in the Gospel of Luke, asserted: “The Church fails to carry out part of that which she has been commanded to do if she does not extol Mary. She deviates from the biblical word if praise of Mary is silenced in her. For then she would no longer be praising God in an adequate manner.”<sup>39</sup>

In searching for specific reasons that private devotion to Mary has not typically drawn many faithful of late, it is tempting to rest on a single explanation as comprehensive, such as the oft-advanced observation that increased lay engagement in the liturgy since Vatican II has decreased private devotions, as per a reported historical pattern of inverse relationship between devotional practice and liturgical understanding and involvement. But that would fail to appreciate that, issued more than a decade after Vatican II, by which time levels of Marian devotion had already fallen significantly, *Marialis Cultus* meant to “enhance” Marian devotion, even in the form of devotions,

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<sup>38</sup> MC, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “‘You are full of grace’: Elements of biblical devotion to Mary,” *Communio*, 16, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 54–68, here 55. Ratzinger noted that, “[b]ecause ‘all generations’ have venerated her, the richness of Marian knowledge has grown almost incalculably” (p. 56).

“not only with the intention of interpreting the sentiments of the Church and our own personal inclination but also because, as is well known, this devotion forms a very noble part of the whole sphere of that sacred worship in which there intermingle the highest expressions of wisdom and religion and which is therefore the primary task of the People of God.”<sup>40</sup> It also would not acknowledge that the distinct guideline areas, identified by the Pope to ensure that new and revised devotional exercises will “emphasize and accentuate the bond which unites us to her who is the Mother of Christ and our Mother in the communion of saints,”<sup>41</sup> are presented with thought sketches that suggest they might function not only as repositories of insights but also as sources of inspiration for Marian devotion(s). If the guideline areas are to fulfill their possibilities, reflection within them must be readily accessible to, if not directly conducive to, the impulses of Marian devotion(s) whose content it can protect theologically, notwithstanding, where theology as a discipline is concerned, necessary occupation also with matters not explicitly Mariological.

### **Guidelines: Theological Reflection on Mary and Devotion**

With respect to the guideline areas designated for the development of “other forms of piety side by side with

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<sup>40</sup> MC, Introduction.

<sup>41</sup> MC, 29.



liturgical worship,”<sup>42</sup> Pope Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus* identified obstacles to proper Marian devotion that had arisen after Vatican II in association with the liturgy. Some pastors had suppressed “devotions of piety,” creating a “vacuum.” Others had “mix[ed] practices of piety and liturgical acts in hybrid celebrations.” Both cases arose from difficulties in implementing the Council’s direction for devotions to be “harmonized with the liturgy,” “not be suppressed” and “not merged into it.”<sup>43</sup> The first part of *Marialis Cultus*, “Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Liturgy,” provides a detailed account that can assist in necessary corrections, via “wise pastoral action” that will “emphasize the proper nature of the liturgical acts” and “enhance the value of practices of piety in order to adapt them to the needs of individual communities in the Church and to make them valuable aids to the liturgy.”<sup>44</sup> Of particular interest for the current reflection are factors related to the other areas—of Bible, ecumenism, and anthropology—that since *Marialis Cultus* may have frustrated Paul VI’s intention of “a salutary increase of devotion to Mary.”<sup>45</sup> Although not necessarily originating there, some of these are manifest influentially in academic theology that supplies insights providing “doctrinal data”

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<sup>42</sup> MC, 24.

<sup>43</sup> MC, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> MC, 58.

that can renew Marian devotions. Obviously, the discipline's special role in the guideline areas does not include developing or reforming devotions, work given to "episcopal conferences, local churches, religious families and communities of the faithful."<sup>46</sup> Inside and outside the academy, it should not be surprising that myriad new directions would be pursued and then revised after the momentous late council, nor that some of these would impact attention to Mary, whose presentation was intensely debated by the council fathers. The quick reduction in private devotion and projects bolstering it may be reversed as suddenly, via emerging interests, noticeable alongside trends that may have discouraged devotion. Paul VI encouraged new Mariological reflection, faithful to Scripture and doctrine while meaningful to contemporary women and men.<sup>47</sup> Mary is a model of discipleship for all, in any age, for her immediate and complete acceptance of God's will and her "charity and a spirit of service."<sup>48</sup> "The Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church,"<sup>49</sup> she also is "our sister" who "fully shared our lot," he wrote. Our

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<sup>46</sup> MC, 24. The Pope wrote that "the forms in which this devotion is expressed, being subject to the ravages of time, show the need for a renewal that will permit them to substitute elements that are transient, to emphasize the elements that are ever new and to incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from theological reflection and the proposals of the Church's magisterium."

<sup>47</sup> MC, 34–37.

<sup>48</sup> MC, 35.

<sup>49</sup> MC, Introduction and, with similar wording, elsewhere.

devotion to her, “an intrinsic element of Christian worship,” “recalls Mary’s glory which ennoble the whole of mankind.”<sup>50</sup>

Regarding the Bible, Paul VI noted that it “is replete with the mystery of the Savior, and from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, also contains clear references to her who was the Mother and associate of the Savior.” For Marian devotions, “texts of prayers and chants should draw their inspiration and their wording from the Bible.” In these and all Marian piety, “devotion to the Virgin should be imbued with the great themes of the Christian message.”<sup>51</sup> Late in the document, he offered the Angelus and the rosary as fitting traditional devotions fulfilling these requirements.<sup>52</sup> Meticulous biblical studies of recent decades can invest with greater meaning existing Marian devotions, modified where appropriate, plus inspire new devotions. But an often highly specialized theological enterprise can effectively separate insights of biblical exegesis from devotional and spiritual “attitudes” that apply them on the practical level.

Two theological systems whose influence perhaps is yet to be fully realized, however, offer a reintegration in theology such that the discipline’s insights, including those explicitly scriptural, might be less obscured to devotional interests, including those Marian. For the good of theology,

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<sup>50</sup> MC, 56.

<sup>51</sup> MC, 30.

<sup>52</sup> MC, 40–55.

a perspective influenced by Balthasar would say that theology and “spirituality,”<sup>53</sup> even “sanctity,”<sup>54</sup> must be rejoined to transcend a dominantly modern scientific approach; a perspective influenced by Lonergan might assert that theological specialties can maintain “scientific” rigor but want coordination by way of spirituality. Both Balthasar and Lonergan explicitly placed the orientation of the theologian—affectively and volitionally, as well as intellectually—at the center of method. Indeed, in Balthasar’s thought, theology in itself should be Marian: Mary should be imitated, in that theologizing should assume her spirituality.

“Theology speaks of an event so unique, so extraordinary that it is never permissible to abstract from it ... methodologically bracketing ... all that is factual.”<sup>55</sup> “True theology” is practiced by the saints,<sup>56</sup> who “[w]ith Mary ... sit at the feet of Jesus, hearing from his own mouth the words of revelation,” Balthasar wrote.<sup>57</sup> “They do not want to stop listening, not for a single moment, to what is being revealed, as though the content of revelation were an event long since concluded, over and done with, something

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<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology: I. The Word Made Flesh*, 183, 214, and elsewhere.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 181, 183.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

there to be examined and probed like any other object of science.”<sup>58</sup> In this way, “theology in the Church proceeds always as a continuous dialogue between Bridegroom and bride (of whom Mary is the prototype).”<sup>59</sup> He noted that “[t]he theology of the Fathers, and that of the Middle Ages, was *doctrina sacra*, both in its object and in its form: it retained both the spiritual dimension of the objective mystery and of the Holy Spirit’s initiation not merely in general as a vague atmosphere (“unction”), but at every stage of thought.”<sup>60</sup> Today, he argued, there is a “cleavage” of “dogmatic theology on the one hand, on the other the spirituality of the empirical subject,” in “endeavors to make theology conform to the ideals of modern science.”<sup>61</sup> In his assessment, “the inevitable and progressive relative independence of the various disciplines” is a much less critical issue than “the loss of the objective spiritual medium of which the old theology was so conscious as it proceeded in its development.”<sup>62</sup> Needed for “the estranged disciplines, dogmatic theology and spirituality,” is “the spiritual dimension [that] can only be recovered through the soul of man being profoundly moved as a result of his direct encounter with revealed truth, so that it is borne in upon him,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 214.

once and for all, how the theologian should think and speak, and how he should not,” he claimed.<sup>63</sup> Properly, theology, “with the central doctrines of revelation always in view, inquires, in a spirit of obedience and reverence, what processes of human thought, what modes of approach are best fitted to bring out the meaning of what has been revealed.”<sup>64</sup> In this last quoted contention, Lonergan wrote similarly—about the critical specialty in his theological method.

Lonergan’s organization of the theological enterprise by functional rather than field or medieval subject specialties<sup>65</sup> places explicit love of God at the center of theological method via the functional specialty of foundations dependent upon “religious experience”<sup>66</sup> and “an objectification of conversion.”<sup>67</sup> Providing unity among the specialties, foundations are “concerned largely with the origins, the genesis, the present state, the possible developments and adaptations of the categories in which

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>65</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 145. [Some of this summary and related points were given in my article “Theological Instruction and Faith Transmission: Lonergan’s Method as Pedagogy Theology,” *New Blackfriars*, 95, no. 1059 (2014): 593–605.]

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 130. Lonergan explained “foundations present, not doctrines, but the horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended” (p. 131).

Christians understand themselves, communicate with one another, and preach the gospel to all nations,”<sup>68</sup> he wrote. Distinguished initially by its “phase” (according to whether it “encounters the past,” studying the record “about God and the economy of salvation,”<sup>69</sup> or “confronts the present and future,”<sup>70</sup> “enlightened by the past,” focusing upon today’s “problems”<sup>71</sup>), a functional specialty’s further delineation emerges from the four levels of “conscious and intentional operations” that Lonergan identified (“experiencing,” “understanding,” “judgment,” and “decision”<sup>72</sup>), resulting in research, interpretation, history, and dialectic in phase one and, in phase two, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.<sup>73</sup> One “enters explicitly into theology”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. “Experiencing” pertains to “the apprehension of data,” “understanding” to “insight into the apprehended data,” “judgment” to “acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses and theories put forward by understanding to account for the data,” and “decision” to “acknowledgment of values and the selection of the methods or other means that lead to their realization.” Lonergan noted that “one operates on all four levels to achieve the end proper to some particular level,” yet “there are four levels and so four proper ends” in each of the two phases of theology (p. 134).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 127–133.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 135.

in phase two. Yet functional specialties in both phases, while maintaining purview over their own theological “moments,” do not operate without reference to other levels, particularly to foundations. Biblical study, principally located in the first-phase functional specialties of research and interpretation, in Lonergan’s system does not require conversion. But, affected by its proximity to foundations, especially as exegetical work reaches the faithful beyond the academy via communications, the devotional as well as the spiritual might readily find mooring there as in other specialties, all depending upon Scripture as theology’s “soul.”<sup>75</sup> In explicit, direct reference to conversion, in any system, more devotional and spiritual attitudes might be engendered from biblical exegesis itself. Addressing concerns about a

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<sup>75</sup> Paul VI, Pope, *Dei Verbum* (18 Nov. 1965), available from the Vatican, at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html) (accessed 15 May 2014), no. 24. Importantly for the manner of examining the biblical record, Lonergan, in *Method in Theology*, admitted that some confusion may result from the fact that it is in the functional specialty of doctrines, far beyond research and interpretation, that parameters for research are decided (p. 299). He maintained that “the method is designed to take care of the matter,” such as the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. Theologians should simply work within their functional purview (p. 150). Presumably the later functional specialties will appropriately make felt their presence, and judgments, to other specialties: “The various specialties interact. If in doctrines a theologian changes his mind about the areas relevant to theological research, he will be led also to change his practice in research” (p. 151).



dominant use of the historical-critical method,<sup>76</sup> Benedict XVI, in an interview before his retirement, asserted that “we need a synthesis between an exegesis that operates with historical reason and an exegesis that is guided by faith. We have to bring the two things into a proper relationship to each other. That is also a requirement of the basic relationship between faith and reason.”<sup>77</sup>

Turning to ecumenism, where dialogue since *Mariialis Cultus* has been rich and in regard to Mary considerable, Paul VI pointed to the intrinsic ecumenical spirit residing in the Catholic Church’s invocation of Mary for “the union of all the baptized within a single People of God.”<sup>78</sup> Catholics have devotion to Mary in common with the Orthodox and with Anglicans; there is also unity in this devotion with Reform Christians, whenever there is “[p]raising [of] God with the very words of the Virgin (cf. Lk 1:46–55),” he

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<sup>76</sup> The concerns were outlined a couple of decades ago in the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (23 April 1993), published in *Origins* (6 January 1994), available from Catholic Resources, at [http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC\\_Interp.htm](http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm) (accessed 15 May 2014).

<sup>77</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, trans. Michael J. Miller and Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 172; orig. ed., *Licht der Welt: Der Papst, die Kirche und die Zeichen der Zeit: Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> MC, 32, cf. LG, 69: AAS 57 (1965): 66–67.

wrote.<sup>79</sup> Devotion has been defended, explained, and contextualized in ecumenical conversation, notably between Catholics and Lutherans, where Paul VI's guidelines have been asserted for their proper ordering—in Christ.<sup>80</sup> Toward increasing Christian unity in Marian matters, German Catholic-Lutheran dialogue has suggested that Catholics should “make their own the concern of the Reformation that the role of Christ as the one Mediator, the primacy of faith and grace, and the preeminence of the word of God in the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Bilateral Working Group of the German National Bishops' Conference and the Church Leadership of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, *Communio Sanctorum: The Church as the Communion of Saints*, trans. Mark W. Jeske, Michael Root, and Daniel R. Smith (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), para. 266; orig. ed., *Communio Sanctorum: Die Kirche als Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 2000). See chap. 7, part 3, “The Veneration of the Saints,” and part 4, “The Veneration of Mary, the Mother of the Lord,” for the full discussion. For earlier conversation, see *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII*, ed. H. George Anderson, J. Francis Stafford, and Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), esp. pp. 61–62, para. 104, supported by the section of the volume in which this is situated, “The Problem Reexamined,” as well as sections “Catholic Reflections” and “Lutheran Reflections.” For growth in Christian unity, the proposal was made that, in sensitivity to the Lutheran concern that veneration of Mary and the saints not threaten the conviction that Christ is *the* Mediator, Catholics should not require Lutherans to hold the Marian dogmas or to invoke the saints. But, in sensitivity to the consistent Catholic tradition of veneration of Mary and the saints as it is articulated in Vatican II documents, Lutherans should not charge that practices of veneration are counter to the gospel or that they foster idolatry.

Bible are preserved precisely in relation to Mary.”<sup>81</sup> Lutherans should “honor the efforts of the Catholic side to establish the place of Mary christologically and ecclesiologically.”<sup>82</sup> But beyond ecumenical conversation, despite some high-profile Mariological projects in a growing field and even in consideration of the Mariological content of some important current projects of ecclesiology and Christology, Marian reflection has not kept pace with other theological areas. Marian studies after Vatican II still are conducted by a relatively small number of theologians, and Mary is infrequently a featured topic in professional journals or at academic conferences except those ordinarily dedicated to her. Perhaps in Catholic openness not only to Christian brothers and sisters but also to the world, this situation reflects Catholic sensitivity to the possibility of confounding others when Marian devotion is misinterpreted. Younger generations of Catholics especially are disconnected by unfamiliarity, on both theoretical and practical levels, from traditions of Marian devotion and devotion generally, further depleting attention to the very activities that Paul VI believed could lead to increasing Christian unity.

Pope Paul VI acknowledged that “there exist important differences between the thought of many of our brethren in other Churches and ecclesial communities and the Catholic

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., para. 264.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., para. 267.

doctrine on ‘Mary’s role in the work of salvation.’”<sup>83</sup> Yet, he stated, “her intercession can help to bring to realization the time when the disciples of Christ will again find full communion in faith.”<sup>84</sup> Since then, the Dombes Group, issuing *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, stated that it had “taken a fresh look at the place of Mary in Christian faith and concluded that she has been more the victim than the cause of discord.”<sup>85</sup> In light of the observation that imitation of Mary is an element of both Marian devotion, which all Christians do not favor, and Marian spirituality, which all Christians do favor in the form of the spirituality of Mary, it can be helpful in explaining devotion by way of spirituality to note even partial convergences among Christians. For instance, Martin Luther, in his 1520–21 Exposition of the Magnificat, as echoed in comments about the saints in his Preface to the 1535 Confession of Faith, presented Mary as a teacher in faith, writing that “[w]hen men accord us praise and honor, we ought to profit by the example of the Mother of God ...

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<sup>83</sup> MC, 33; cf. the II Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 20: AAS 57 (1965): 105.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Alain Blancy, Maurice Jourjon, and the Dombes Group, *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), back cover; orig. ed., *Marie dans le dessein de Dieu et la communion des saints* ([Paris]: Bayard Éditions, 1999). All discussion participants accepted “the virginal conception and motherhood of Mary,” despite other areas of disagreement.

and ascribe them to Him in heaven, to whom they belong.”<sup>86</sup> The Catholic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace affirms this basic statement, of course with acknowledgement of Mary’s graced “cooperation.”

Past and current Catholic stirrings in Marian devotion—aiming at a spirituality *of* Mary as well as a spirituality *about* Mary—exhibit the conviction that honor of Mary *is* emphatic praise of God. Marian consecration, to Jesus through Mary, for instance, in its recently revived popularity following the example of Pope St. John Paul II and promotion by new publications and parish programming, clearly conveys the Christological value of Marian devotion.<sup>87</sup> Paul VI envisioned a time, arriving “even if only slowly,” in which Marian devotion would be “not an obstacle but a path and a rallying point for the union of all who believe in Christ.”<sup>88</sup>

Related to anthropology, Pope Paul VI noted that devotion to Mary has suffered due to a lack of connection of contemporary Christians with traditional presentations of

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<sup>86</sup> Martin Luther, “The Magnificat,” *Luther’s Works*, vol. 21: *The Sermon on the Mount (Sermons) and The Magnificat*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, trans. A. T. W. Steinhäuser (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1956), 330. In this early work, Luther also advocated invocation of Mary, “that for her sake God may grant and do what we request,” “that the work may be every way God’s alone” (p. 329).

<sup>87</sup> Of publications, particularly influential in the United States has been Michael E. Gaitley’s *33 Days to Morning Glory* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2013).

<sup>88</sup> MC, 33.

her in which “the horizons of her life, ... seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today.”<sup>89</sup> He wished that the “human sciences”<sup>90</sup> would be employed to show that Mary, model for us because “she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Lk 1:38),”<sup>91</sup> can, through a correlation of our “anthropological ideas” with the Gospel portrait of her, be seen as “a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time.”<sup>92</sup> He sketched her relevance to every Christian state and style of life and to the Christian community wholly.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps, however, it has been his mention that she is “the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy” which has gained the most attention in and through academic theology, coinciding with new dimensions of awareness of and new approaches to social justice issues.<sup>94</sup> Here Mary’s role as a model certainly *is* apparent, particularly as feminist and liberation theologies, still young at the issuance of *Marialis Cultus*, have found in Mary inspiration for all, yet

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<sup>89</sup> MC, 34.

<sup>90</sup> MC, 34, 37.

<sup>91</sup> MC, 35.

<sup>92</sup> MC, 37.

<sup>93</sup> MC, 34–37, esp. 34, 37.

<sup>94</sup> MC, 37.

perhaps, in a special way, for women and those at the fringes of society.

Those who feel helpless can identify with Mary's situation—her marginalization, poverty, and oppression—and be empowered by her simple faith. This interest in Mary can elicit devotional “attitudes” and engender devotions again, especially when devotion is considered as broadly as Paul VI outlined it. However, occasionally this Marian interest has pointedly not encouraged private devotion to Mary and the saints, at least in traditional ways, sometimes for the concern that certain varieties of it can disrupt egalitarian community among the faithful. It has been especially meaningful to some that Pope Paul VI ended his extensive encouragement for recitation of the rosary with the statement that “this very worthy devotion should not be propagated in a way that is too one-sided or exclusive.” For “[t]he Rosary is an excellent prayer, but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard.”<sup>95</sup> In her work on the Communion of the Saints, Elizabeth Johnson may have encapsulated the sentiment of many “communities within modern/postmodern culture”<sup>96</sup> in declaring that the devotional activity of “invoking the saints is but one way to

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<sup>95</sup> MC, 55. See Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2004), 134. “Serenely Free” is the title of a chapter of Johnson’s *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2003), 123–138.

<sup>96</sup> Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 130.

honor the saints, certainly not the most important way, not even essential.” Still she did offer that the practice, which can turn “deeply problematic,” can have “a modicum of meaning” from a certain view:

When enacted within the logic of solidarity in a community of grace, it is a prayer form that activates the bonds of companionship between wayfarers and saints in heaven. In the world of grace as in nature, everyone depends on everyone else, and the courage, witness, and love of one person affects the whole body, as indeed does everyone’s apathy and sin. Calling on this cloud of witnesses for their prayer recognizes and actualizes this affiliation between our lives in a spirit of appreciation.<sup>97</sup>

If a reduction in veneration is experienced, this, she advanced, “can indicate a lack of fit between the contemporary quest for God and the religious forms of another cultural era, which are quietly laid aside in favor of a concentration on essential matters in accord with biblical patterns of faith amid the struggles of history.”<sup>98</sup>

But cultural eras can commingle. For example, today’s enthusiasm for the Marian consecration coexists with social justice initiatives, finding new insights even in Mariological studies. And, the current pontificate, thus far appreciated even beyond the Church for its urgent call for just social structures, is also characterized by the Pope’s devotion to Mary. The communal dimension of Marian devotion to

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 130.



which Paul VI gave attention, not only in connection with the liturgy and with group practice of (private) devotions but also with “the liberating energies of man and of society,”<sup>99</sup> has been acknowledged by Pope Francis in his continuation of a papal tradition of encouragement to the faithful to pray the rosary and invoke Mary, “so that the Lord may grant mercy and peace to the Church and to all the world.”<sup>100</sup> Pope Paul VI wrote that, acknowledging “Mary’s mission in the mystery of the Church,”<sup>101</sup> “exercises of piety” should remind that “the Church and Mary collaborate to give birth to the Mystical Body of Christ.” Then, because we are “sons and daughters” of both the Church and Mary, even “the action of the Church in the world can be likened to an extension of Mary’s concern.”<sup>102</sup> This link of the devotional to the social as a Mariological notion, perhaps more so than at the time of *Marialis Cultus*, in the everyday global consciousness experienced by many or most men and women today, might resonate among the faithful in the call to Christian mission.

A more extensive consideration of developments since *Marialis Cultus* that relate to the status of Marian devotion,

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<sup>99</sup> MC, 37.

<sup>100</sup> See “May, Month of the Rosary” (7 May 2014), available from Vatican Information Service, at <http://www.vis.va/vissolr/index.php?vi=all&dl=aa79ec0b-108e-1930-cf91-536a270564aa&dl t=text/xml&dl a=y&ul=1&ev=1> (accessed 14 May 2014).

<sup>101</sup> MC, 28.

<sup>102</sup> MC, 28.

including devotions, would have to pose questions beyond the guideline areas. Closing this examination, it can be noted that even traditional devotional activities may be made “new” in their re-presentation and adoption amidst the concerns of our day, allowing added dimensions of meaning for Marian devotions to be grasped. This might occur even through consciousnesses that initially may have seemed to discourage at least private Marian practices and perhaps may play an important role in ensuring that Marian devotion is “rightly ordered and developed.”<sup>103</sup> This reflection now turns to a summary observation about Marian devotion in its relationship to Marian spirituality in an eschatological perspective.

### **Conclusion: Unity of Marian Devotion and Marian Spirituality**

As this reflection has proposed in pondering the direction of *Marialis Cultus*, a value of the distinction between Marian spirituality and Marian devotion is the stimulus that each provides for the other. A spirituality *of* Mary will, in our case (versus Mary’s own case), involve a spirituality *about* Mary in the form of Marian devotion, with or without private devotions; the fact of the Incarnation elicits it. Focused upon our Savior, in our view Mary will always be the mother of the Word become flesh who therefore is “our mother in the order of grace,”<sup>104</sup> from her fiat “until the eternal fulfillment

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<sup>103</sup> MC, Title (variation).

<sup>104</sup> LG, 61.

of all the elect.”<sup>105</sup> *Lumen Gentium* states that, in the Pilgrim Church, “the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, [should] be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of centuries be made of great moment, and those decrees, which have been given in the early days regarding the cult of images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed.”<sup>106</sup> For, “while the Mother is honored, the Son, through whom all things have their being and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, is rightly known, loved and glorified.”<sup>107</sup> Likewise, devotion, as might be expressed in devotions, can be empty if not practiced in a true Marian spirituality.

*Lumen Gentium* directs that “the faithful [are to] remember moreover that true devotion consists neither in sterile or transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.”<sup>108</sup> As previously noted, imitation of Mary exists as a component of both Marian devotion and Marian

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<sup>105</sup> LG, 62.

<sup>106</sup> LG, 67; cf. Conc. Nicaenum II, anno 787: Mansi 13, 378–379; Denz. 302 (600–601) and Conc. Trident., sess. 2S: Mansi 33, 171–172.

<sup>107</sup> LG, 66; cf. Col 1:15–16 and Col 1:19.

<sup>108</sup> LG, 67.

spirituality. When imitation is fully conscious and intentional, it will be devotion—and then other interconnected “devotional attitudes”<sup>109</sup> will arise or be enhanced. Particularly, along with veneration that might include invocation, imitation assists us on the path of discipleship of Christ, with and hopefully increasingly in the loving disposition of—the spirituality *of*—his first and most perfect disciple.

In his *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, St. Louis de Montfort, following tradition, cited from the writings of Sts. Augustine and Bonaventure. The Marian devotee wrote that even the angels in heaven are “unceasingly” venerating Mary, with the desire, in service to her, to be of service to others and to lead others to honor her.<sup>110</sup> Paul VI’s thought, as stated at the outset, can lead to the conclusion that ideally and ultimately Marian spirituality and Marian devotion *will* be joined perfectly. In perfection, in the saints of a Marian spirituality, there will be perpetual devotion to her through whom Christ, whom we love, in “burning love”<sup>111</sup> for her, assumed humanity and thereby opened eternity to it. Likewise, in perfected devotion to her, her spirituality will have its eternal fruition in the saints.

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<sup>109</sup> See MC, 22.

<sup>110</sup> See St. Louis de Montfort, *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, available from Eternal World Television courtesy of the Montfort Fathers, at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/montfort/truedevo.htm> (accessed 20 May 2014), no. 8.

<sup>111</sup> MC, 22.

Until then, again, our differing consciousnesses and cultures, various types and states of conversion, and diverse personalities and circumstances of time and place might mean that one more than the other might be our imperfect albeit graced practice now. Clearly though, *Marialis Cultus* convinces us that it is desirable for both devotion and spirituality to be cultivated.

### **Author Biography**

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