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An Ecumenical Portrait of Mary at End-of-the-Century America

Donald Boccardi
AN ECUMENICAL PORTRAIT OF MARY
AT END-OF-THE-CENTURY AMERICA

Bro. Donald Boccardi, S.M.*

This is a portrait of Mary painted with statistics, an unusual medium for a portrait. (You might say it is a “painting by the numbers.”) It has some bold lines and some barely perceptible ones, some bright colors and some somber ones. Scripture and its varied interpretations provide the background for the picture. It leans against crumbling walls of division and reflects multi-colored rays coming from the windows which are part of those walls. Builders from different areas have taken parts of the walls and begun erecting bridges. This presentation has for its purpose to help fill out that picture as it develops here in the United States of America, at the turn of the century, the beginning of the new millennium.

Prologue

As prologue, I would like to sketch in broad strokes the background of the portrait painter, as well as to acquaint you with the statistical study which provides the figure and the shading in the portrait.

I grew up in a small western Pennsylvanian steel town where it was clear that if you were a Catholic, you were interested in Mary, and if you were not a Catholic, you were not interested in Mary. Coming from a devout Catholic family where Mary was very important, I grew up in an atmosphere where, while others might suspect us of worshipping the

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Virgin Mary, we believed those others were incomplete Christians and in need of conversion to our system of religious images. Yet the experience of my neighborhood laid the groundwork for a practical tolerance for religious and ethnic differences, since we were a mixture of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews—groups whose religions were fused with their cultures. We were Italians, Irish, and Welsh; we had the Luxenbergs and the Hugheses, the Caplans and the Barberios, the Wilkofskys and the Ruscilles, the Oswalds, the Kings, and the Boccardis.

The dome of the Presbyterian church could be seen from my front porch; the Methodist church stood across the street from my high school; and the Orthodox church lay hidden across from my parish church, the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (popularly known as BVM). Our nextdoor neighbors were devout members of the Christian and Missionary Alliance who worshipped in a converted garage near the school. As I walked to my parish church, I passed the First Christian Church. Before learning about the differences between denominations, I remember asking my mother whether, if we were good, we would one day “advance” to joining that church, since it was the first church of Christ. The answer was an introduction to denominational boundaries.

Since that time, I—along with most of American society that has European roots—have moved from the ethnic neighborhood of religious exclusiveness. We have all been influenced by Vatican II’s call for tolerance and respect for other’s religious denominations. As a Marianist (Society of Mary), I was very interested in Marian topics, but, due to the manner in which some of these were presented in pre-Vatican II Mariology, not attracted to further studies in the field. After the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of Marian studies promoted by Paul VI’s Marialis Cultus, however, new possibilities opened. My interest in ecumenism and Mary combined and led me to the International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, where I engaged in a statistical study of what Christians of different denominations actually believed about the Virgin Mary in the 1990s.
A. Methodology

A questionnaire was developed, consisting of 35 questions covering the spectrum of Marian thought being developed today, based on the general guidelines of Marialis Cultus (1973) and the Zaragoza Declaration of 1979. The scope of the questions covered the areas of Mary in Scripture, liturgy, patristics, Christology, ecclesiology, anthropology, ministry, devotion and ecumenism. Some questions concerning the religious imagination were also included, as were some dealing with the papacy and the feminist movement.

Those surveyed were clergy and laity of eight Christian churches in the United States: Orthodox, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, United Methodist, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist and Assemblies of God (Pentecostal). An attempt was made to have a sampling of clergy and laity from each of the eight churches in areas where they were numerous—"stronghold areas"—and in areas where they were a minority. San Antonio was chosen as the city where all but Roman Catholics are in a minority position. San Francisco was chosen as a contrasting Roman Catholic area to compare with San Antonio. "Stronghold" areas were designated for each of the churches as follows: Orthodox in Boston, Lutherans in Minneapolis, Episcopalians in Manhattan, Methodists in Houston, Presbyterians in Richmond, Southern Baptists in Dallas, and Assemblies of God in Little Rock.

1 The Zaragossa Declaration On Mary" (Ecumenical Trends, February, 1980), p. 25. The document was formulated at the International Mariological Congress, Zaragoza, Spain, by representatives of the Anglican, Lutheran, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Reformed Churches.

2 Selection of stronghold cities was made with the help of the Executive Board of the local branch of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a group which includes all the traditions being studied, except for Baptists and Pentecostals. Information concerning the latter two groups was obtained from the local Community of Churches director.

The lists of names for the clergy of all eight denominations in the San Antonio area were obtained from the San Antonio Community of Churches Office which has the listings for all area clergy of all denominations. The administrative centers of the Lutherans in Minneapolis and the Methodists in Houston supplied lists of clergy in their areas. Contact persons in Dallas and Richmond collected lists of clergy for the Southern Baptists and Presbyterians in those cities. The Yellow Pages of the telephone
For groups containing less than 50 names, all the individuals were contacted. For those with more than 50 names, selection was done by taking every second or third name, depending on the total number, so that the total for each group was as similar as possible. Distribution to the laity took place by asking some clergy who were surveyed (16 in all) to distribute the questionnaire after a Sunday service or at a church gathering.

Background questions included information on religious denomination, race, gender, educational background, age, position, marital status, annual income, church activities and church attendance.

A number of persons advised me concerning the formulation of the survey instrument, but their suggestions were at times mutually exclusive and the final choices were mine. Some "control questions" were designed—questions which ask the same basic thought in two different ways—one in a more traditional way, the other in a more contemporary way. The sets of control questions are: nos. 14 and 19 (re: the Assumption); nos. 15 and 16 (re: the Immaculate Conception); nos. 12 and 28 (re: intercession). Questions 24, 25, and 26 were taken from the Zaragoza Declaration.

The survey consisted of thirty-five statements. The respondent was to reply to each of these by selecting one of the following responses:

1. Agree strongly
2. Agree slightly
3. Disagree slightly
4. Strongly disagree
5. Can't decide
6. Don't know (Can't answer).

directories of Manhattan, Boston and Little Rock provided information on Episcopalian, Orthodox and Assemblies of God clergy. The Official Catholic Directory, containing lists of all Catholic clergy in the United States by diocese, was the source for the clergy in the San Francisco area.

3Consultants for this survey were: Bro. Jerome Matz, S.M., Ph.D. (Department of Sociology, St. Mary's University); Dr. Thomas Hoffman (Department of Political Science, St. Mary's University); Fr. Johann Roten, S.M., S.T.D. (International Marian Research Institute, University of Dayton); the Executive Board of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary (San Antonio Branch).
B. The Survey Results

The following summary presents the results of the denominational responses to each question, from both clergy and laity, indicating whether they clearly agreed or disagreed; whether the results were varied and inconclusive; or whether they could not decide, did not know, or could not answer.

In the following descriptions, the italicized words should be interpreted in the following way:

- _agreed_ means over 2/3 of the respondents cited no. 1 (Agree strongly) or no. 2 (Agree slightly);
- _agreed strongly_ means that the answers were predominantly no. 1 (Agree strongly);
- _agreed slightly_ means that the answers were predominantly no. 2 (Agree slightly);
- _disagreed_ means over 2/3 of the respondents cited no. 3 (Disagree slightly) or no. 4 (Disagree strongly);
- _disagreed slightly_ means that the answers were predominantly in no. 3 (Disagree slightly);
- _disagreed strongly_ means the majority of answers were from no. 4 (Disagree strongly);
- _varied_ means the answers were spread out between Agreement (nos. 1 & 2) and Disagreement (nos. 3 & 4), without any conclusive results;
- _undecided/uninformed_ indicates that the predominant answers were no. 5 (Can't decide) and no. 6 (Don't know/ Can't answer)—or no answer at all;
- _some undecided/uninformed_ indicates that between 18% and 30% of the respondents cited no. 5 (Can't decide) or no. 6 (Don't know);
- _many undecided/uninformed_ means that between 30% and 50% of the respondents cited no. 5 (Can't decide) or no. 6 (Don't know); (Note: The latter percentage [70%] was the highest anywhere in this survey.)
1. The Ecumenical Movement Is Willed by Christ.

Orthodox clergy agreed, with many undecided/uninformed; half of the Orthodox laity agreed, and the other half were undecided/uninformed. Lutheran clergy agreed, Lutheran laity agreed strongly, with some undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy agreed, while laity agreed strongly, with some undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy agreed, and the laity agreed strongly, with some undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy agreed strongly (at a higher percentage than any other group); Catholic laity agreed, with some undecided/uninformed. Presbyterian clergy agreed, with some undecided/uninformed, in Richmond. Presbyterian laity in San Antonio disagreed or were undecided/uninformed, whereas in Richmond they agreed. Responses from Baptist clergy varied (were largely inconclusive); Baptist laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy disagreed or were undecided/uninformed; responses from the laity were widely varied (inconclusive).

2. Significant Progress Has Been Made in Our Churches over the Past 25 Years toward Restoring Christian Unity.

Orthodox clergy agreed, with a wide distribution of responses; Orthodox laity agreed slightly. Lutheran clergy and laity agreed. Methodist clergy agreed, while the laity agreed slightly, with many undecided/uninformed (in Houston). Episcopal clergy agreed, and Episcopal laity agreed strongly. Catholic clergy and laity agreed strongly. Presbyterian clergy agreed, but the laity agreed strongly, with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Baptist clergy agreed in San Antonio, but in Dallas their responses varied (were inconclusive). Baptist laity disagreed slightly. Assemblies of God clergy agreed, while responses from the laity were varied (inconclusive).

3. The Inclusion of Discussion on the Role of Mary in the Churches Is Essential for Ecumenical Development.

Orthodox clergy agreed, whereas responses from the laity were varied (inconclusive). Lutheran clergy agreed, but the laity
agreed slightly. Methodist clergy agreed in San Antonio, but disagreed in Houston; Methodist laity disagreed in San Antonio and were varied (inconclusive) in Houston. Episcopal clergy varied (widely so) in San Antonio, but agreed in New York City. Responses from Episcopal laity varied (quite widely). Overall, Catholic clergy and laity agreed, though the San Antonio laity agreed slightly. Presbyterian clergy were varied (inconclusive); responses from the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in Richmond. Baptist clergy disagreed and varied (widely) in their responses; the laity clearly disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity disagreed.

4. I Am Aware of the Inter-faith Discussion by Theologians over the Past Several Years on Mary’s Role in the Churches.

Orthodox clergy agreed; responses from the laity varied (were inconclusive). Lutheran clergy agreed, whereas responses from laity varied widely. Methodist clergy were varied in their responses in San Antonio, with very many undecided/uninformed (70%) in Houston. Responses from Methodist laity varied greatly, with half undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy were also varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed; the laity varied greatly, with many undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy agreed, with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio; laity also agreed, with some undecided/uninformed. Presbyterian clergy varied (were inconclusive) in their responses in San Antonio; in Richmond, they agreed, but there were some undecided/uninformed in both cities. Baptist clergy varied greatly, with some undecided/uninformed; Baptist laity were entirely undecided/uninformed. Assemblies of God clergy varied (were inconclusive), and the laity had many undecided/uninformed.

5. Mary Plays a Significant Role in the Church to Which I Belong.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy in San Antonio disagreed, but responses were varied (inconclusive) in Minneapolis. Lutheran laity disagreed, with some
undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy and laity disagreed, especially the laity of San Antonio. Episcopal clergy varied (were inconclusive) in their responses in San Antonio, but they agreed in New York City. The Episcopal laity’s responses varied greatly in San Antonio, but clearly disagreed in New York City. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy disagreed, especially in Richmond; Presbyterian laity disagreed strongly. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed with the statement, and so did the Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

6. Mary Plays a Significant Role in My Life.
Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. In general, Lutheran clergy disagreed, but a small percentage of them in Minneapolis agreed. Lutheran laity disagreed. Methodist clergy disagreed, but some in San Antonio agreed; Methodist laity disagreed strongly. Episcopal clergy were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio, but agreed in New York; the laity were divided between those who disagreed (in San Antonio) and those who were undecided/uninformed (New York City). Catholic clergy agreed, and laity agreed strongly. Presbyterian clergy disagreed, and the laity disagreed strongly. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed. Likewise, Assemblies of God clergy and laity disagreed.

7. Mary Is the Mother of God.
Orthodox clergy and laity agreed; Lutheran clergy disagreed in San Antonio and responses were varied (inconclusive) in Minneapolis; responses from laity were also varied (inconclusive). Methodist clergy were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio, with many who disagreed (disagreed strongly) or with many undecided/uninformed in Houston. Episcopal clergy agreed; the laity agreed, with some varied (inconclusive) responses. Catholic clergy and laity agreed, with some disagreed in San Antonio. Presbyterian clergy disagreed; Presbyterian laity were varied (inconclusive). Baptist clergy disagreed.

8. Mary’s Faith, as Shown in the Bible, Is a Model for All Christians.
Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy and laity agreed. Methodist clergy agreed, but the laity were var-
(inconclusive) in their responses. Episcopal clergy and laity agreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy and laity agreed. Baptist clergy were varied (inconclusive), with some agreed in San Antonio and Dallas. Assemblies of God clergy agreed; the laity agreed strongly.

9. The Greatest Honor That We Can Give to Mary Is to Imitate Her.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy agreed in San Antonio, with varied (inconclusive) responses in Minneapolis. Methodist clergy agreed in San Antonio, with varied (inconclusive) responses in Houston; responses from Methodist laity were quite varied (inconclusive). Episcopal clergy agreed; responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with some agreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive) in their responses. Baptist clergy were varied (inconclusive) in their responses; the laity disagreed with the statement. In general, Assemblies of God clergy were varied (inconclusive), but some disagreed; Assemblies of God laity were varied (inconclusive).

10. Mary Plays Too Great a Role in the Roman Catholic Church.

Orthodox clergy agreed slightly with the statement; the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed on the issue. Lutheran clergy and laity agreed with the statement, although some laity were undecided. Methodist clergy agreed, with many undecided/uninformed in Houston; Methodist laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio and some agreed in Houston. Episcopal clergy were varied (inconclusive) in their responses in San Antonio and agreed in New York. Catholic clergy varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio with many agreed (30%) in San Francisco. Catholic laity disagreed with the statement. Presbyterian clergy agreed; the laity were undecided/uninformed. Baptist clergy and laity agreed, as did Assemblies of God clergy and laity.
11. I Believe in the Virginal Conception of Jesus within Mary's Womb.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy and laity agreed. Methodist clergy were divided, with many agreed and others undecided; overall, the laity agreed, with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Generally, Episcopal clergy and laity agreed, but some laity disagreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy agreed, with some disagreed in Richmond; the laity agreed. Baptist clergy and laity agreed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity agreed.

12. Just as We Can Ask Our Friends to Pray for Us, We Can Ask Mary to Pray for Us.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed with the statement. Lutheran clergy disagreed; the laity disagreed, but were also varied (inconclusive) in their responses. Methodist clergy disagreed, with some agreed; Methodist laity responses were varied (inconclusive), and some disagreed. Episcopal clergy agreed; the laity were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio and agreed in New York City. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy disagreed, but some in Richmond agreed. Presbyterian laity were varied (inconclusive). Baptist clergy and laity disagreed, and so did the Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

13. Mary Remained a Virgin throughout Her Life.

Orthodox clergy agreed, but the laity were varied (inconclusive) in their responses, with many undecided/uninformed. Lutheran clergy and laity disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed among the laity. Methodist clergy disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy disagreed, with very many undecided/uninformed in New York City. Episcopal laity disagreed with the statement, with many undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy agreed, with some undecided/uninformed, especially in San Francisco. Catholic laity agreed strongly, with some undecided/uninformed, especially in San Francisco. Presbyterian clergy
disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio; the laity were also disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Baptist clergy and laity, as well as Assemblies of God clergy and laity, disagreed.

14. Mary Now Enjoys the Fullness of Resurrection, Body and Soul.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed, with some undecided/uninformed among the laity. Lutheran clergy were varied (inconclusive) with many undecided/uninformed in Minneapolis; Lutheran laity were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio and agreed in Minneapolis, with some undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy were divided, with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio and some agreed in Houston; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy responses were varied (inconclusive), with some agreed; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio and agreed in New York City, with some undecided/uninformed in each place. Catholic clergy and laity agreed with the statement. Presbyterian clergy were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Presbyterian laity agreed, but there was a strong undecided/uninformed current. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed and so did Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

15. Mary, Redeemed by Christ, Remained Sinless from the First Moment of Her Life.

Orthodox clergy disagreed; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Lutheran clergy and laity disagreed, but, especially among the laity, there were many undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy disagreed, with—in San Antonio—some undecided/uninformed and—in Houston—responses which were varied (inconclusive), though tending towards disagreement. Episcopal clergy, in San Antonio and in New York, disagreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed with the statement. Presbyterian clergy and laity disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed among the laity. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed.
Assemblies of God clergy disagreed, whereas responses from the laity were varied (inconclusive).

16. I Believe in the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

Orthodox clergy disagreed; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive). Lutheran clergy disagreed, but the responses of the laity were also varied (inconclusive). Methodist clergy disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Catholic clergy agreed strongly (75%), and the laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy disagreed; the laity were varied (inconclusive). Baptist clergy and laity disagreed, as did Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

17. Mary Is a Stumbling-block on the Road to Christian Unity.

Responses of Orthodox clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed among the laity. Lutheran clergy agreed slightly, but the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many uninformed/undecided. Methodist clergy responses were varied (inconclusive), with some agreed. Methodist laity were also varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal responses, of clergy and laity, were varied (inconclusive). Catholic clergy in San Antonio disagreed, while, in San Francisco, their responses were varied (inconclusive). Responses of Catholic laity—in both places—were varied (inconclusive). Presbyterian clergy agreed slightly; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Baptist clergy agreed, with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio; Baptist laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy agreed, but the laity were varied (inconclusive).

18. Belief in the Existence of Apparitions of Mary Distorts Her Proper Role.

While Orthodox clergy responses were varied (inconclusive), the laity had many undecided/uninformed. Lutheran clergy agreed in San Antonio and varied (inconclusive) in Minneapolis. Overall, Lutheran laity responses were varied (inconclusive). Methodist clergy agreed; the responses
of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy responses were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in New York City. Responses of the Episcopal laity were varied (inconclusive). Catholic clergy responses were also varied (inconclusive); the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with some disagreed. Presbyterian clergy were somewhat agreed, with many undecided/uninformed; the laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Baptist clergy agreed, but the responses of the laity showed many undecided/uninformed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity agreed.

19. I Believe in the Assumption of Mary.

Orthodox clergy agreed, but the Orthodox laity had many undecided/uninformed. While Lutheran clergy disagreed; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy responses were varied (inconclusive), with some disagreed and many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy in San Antonio disagreed; in New York City their responses were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in both places. Responses of Episcopal laity were also varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed responses in Richmond. In general, the responses of Presbyterian laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Baptist clergy disagreed, but among the Baptist laity were many undecided/uninformed. Assemblies of God clergy disagreed, and the laity also disagreed, though there were among them many undecided/uninformed.

20. I Believe in the Communion of Saints.

Orthodox clergy agreed; the laity also agreed, although there were some undecided/uninformed. Lutheran clergy and laity agreed. Methodist clergy and laity agreed, but among the latter group—in San Antonio—there were many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy and laity agreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy and laity
agreed. Baptist clergy responses in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive); in Dallas, some clergy disagreed. Baptist laity disagreed. Responses of Assemblies of God clergy were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed; responses of the laity were also varied (inconclusive).

21. I Believe in the All-holiness of Mary.
Orthodox clergy and laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed among the laity. Lutheran clergy disagreed; the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive). Methodist clergy were also varied (inconclusive), with many “Don’t know’s”; the laity disagreed and had many undecided/uninformed responses. Episcopal clergy were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal laity were divided, with some undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy in San Antonio disagreed; in Richmond there were many undecided/uninformed. Presbyterian laity responses were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity disagreed.

Orthodox clergy agreed slightly, with many undecided/uninformed; the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Responses of Lutheran clergy and laity were also varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy agreed, with many undecided/uninformed in Houston; the laity were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy agreed; the laity were varied (inconclusive), with some agreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy were varied (inconclusive), but the laity agreed. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed, as did Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

23. The Intercession of Mary Detracts from the One-Mediatorship of Christ.
Orthodox clergy disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed; laity were varied (inconclusive). Lutheran clergy and
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laity agreed, with some undecided/uninformed among the laity. Methodist clergy were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in Houston; the laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive). Catholic clergy were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio and disagreed in San Francisco. Catholic laity disagreed. Presbyterian clergy agreed in San Antonio and were positive in Richmond, though—among the latter—there were some undecided/uninformed. Presbyterian laity agreed, but were undecided/uninformed. Baptist clergy and laity agreed; Assemblies of God clergy and laity also agreed.

24. The Idea of Mary as My Spiritual Mother Is an Attractive One for Me.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy disagreed, especially in San Antonio; the laity were varied (inconclusive) in their responses. Methodist clergy in San Antonio disagreed; in Houston, they were varied (inconclusive). Methodist laity disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive); in New York City they agreed; the responses of Episcopal laity were varied (inconclusive). Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy in San Antonio disagreed; in Richmond, they were varied (inconclusive) and tended toward disagreed. Presbyterian laity in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive) at the extremes, with some undecided/uninformed in Richmond. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed, as did the Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

25. The Idea of Mary as My Eldest Sister in the Faith Is an Attractive One for Me.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed among the laity. Responses among Lutheran clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive), as were those of Methodist clergy. Methodist laity disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive), but agreed in New York City; responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive). Catholic clergy and laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed
among the laity in San Francisco. Presbyterian clergy disagreed in San Antonio and were varied (inconclusive) in Richmond; Presbyterian laity in San Antonio agreed, but varied (inconclusive) in Richmond. Baptist clergy in San Antonio disagreed and were varied (inconclusive) in Dallas; laity agreed. Assemblies of God clergy varied; the laity also varied (were inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed.

26. Any Praise of Mary Is Essentially for the Glory of God.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Responses of Lutherans (clergy and laity) and Methodists (clergy and laity) were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy and laity in San Antonio varied (were inconclusive), but those in New York City agreed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy disagreed in San Antonio and were divided, with some undecided/uninformed, in Richmond. Presbyterian laity agreed, but with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Baptist clergy were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio, while those in Dallas disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy disagreed, but the laity were varied (inconclusive).

27. Praise of Mary Is Rightly Expressed in the Liturgy, in Hymns and in the Life of the Faithful.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran (clergy and laity) responses were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed. Methodist clergy responses varied (were inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed in Houston. Responses of Methodist laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio and agreed in New York City; the laity agreed, with some undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy in San Antonio disagreed; while those in Richmond were varied (inconclusive) and disagreed slightly. The laity in San Antonio agreed, but those in Richmond were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed in both cities.
Baptist clergy disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity disagreed.

28. Asking Mary to Pray with Me Is an Appealing Way of Bringing Mary into My Prayer Life.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy disagreed, but the laity were varied (inconclusive), with some disagreed. Methodist clergy in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive); in Houston, they disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Methodist laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio and agreed in New York City; the responses of the laity were also varied, with many undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed, as did Assemblies of God clergy and laity.

29. Having Works of Art Representing Mary in Church or Home Leads to Superstition.

Orthodox clergy and laity disagreed. Lutheran clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed among the laity. Methodist clergy and laity were also varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed among the San Antonio laity. Episcopal clergy varied (were inconclusive) in San Antonio and disagreed in New York City. Episcopal laity were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy and laity disagreed. Presbyterian clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed among the San Antonio laity. Baptist clergy and laity agreed. While Assemblies of God clergy agreed, the laity largely disagreed.


Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy and laity agreed. Methodist clergy agreed, but the responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive). Episcopal clergy and laity agreed.
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Catholic clergy and laity agreed. Presbyterian clergy were varied (inconclusive), with some agreed; Presbyterian laity in San Antonio disagreed, but those in Richmond agreed. Baptist clergy were varied (inconclusive), but the laity agreed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive).

31. Attention to Mary's Role in the Christian Community Can Be a Positive Factor in the Feminist Movement.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed among the laity. Lutheran clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed among the laity. While Methodist clergy were varied (inconclusive), the laity disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy agreed; Episcopal laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Catholic clergy and laity agreed, with some undecided/uninformed among the laity. Presbyterian clergy in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive), but in Richmond they agreed. Overall, Presbyterian laity agreed, with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio and varied (inconclusive) in Richmond. Baptist clergy were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed. Responses of Assemblies of God clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive).

32. Women Should Be Considered Equal to Men in All Areas of Church Leadership.

Orthodox clergy disagreed; the laity were varied (inconclusive). Lutheran clergy and laity agreed, as did Methodist clergy and laity. Episcopal clergy and laity also agreed. Catholic clergy in San Antonio agreed, but in San Francisco they were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed. Catholic laity were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed.

33. In the Future Structure of Unity for All Christian Churches, I See Some Role for the Bishop of Rome, the Pope.

Orthodox clergy and laity agreed. Lutheran clergy agreed slightly; the laity were varied (inconclusive), with some
undecided/uninformed in Minneapolis. Methodist clergy agreed slightly, with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio; responses of the laity were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy and laity agreed, as did Catholic clergy and laity. Responses of Presbyterian clergy were varied (inconclusive), and the laity in San Antonio were varied (inconclusive), while those in Richmond agreed. Baptist clergy in San Antonio disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed; in Dallas, they were varied (inconclusive). In general, Baptist laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed.

34. My Attitude toward Mary Has Changed Because of the Ecumenical Movement.

Orthodox clergy disagreed, with some undecided/uninformed; the laity disagreed. Lutheran clergy disagreed, but the laity were varied (inconclusive) and some disagreed slightly. While Methodist clergy varied (were inconclusive), the laity disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed. Episcopal clergy in San Antonio disagreed; their responses were varied (inconclusive) in New York City. Episcopal laity were varied (inconclusive), with some disagreed and many undecided/uninformed in New York City. Responses of Catholic clergy were varied (inconclusive), with many undecided/uninformed; Catholic laity were varied (inconclusive) in San Antonio, and they disagreed in San Francisco. Presbyterian clergy in San Antonio disagreed; in Richmond, their responses were varied (inconclusive). Presbyterian laity disagreed, with many undecided/uninformed in San Antonio. Baptist clergy and laity disagreed. Assemblies of God clergy and laity also disagreed.

35. I Want the Movement for Christian Unity to Succeed.

Orthodox clergy and laity, Lutheran clergy and laity, Methodist clergy and laity, Episcopal clergy and laity, Catholic clergy and laity, and Presbyterian clergy and laity all agreed. Baptist clergy responses were varied (inconclusive), with some undecided/uninformed in San Antonio and agreed in
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Dallas. Baptist laity disagreed. Responses of Assemblies of God clergy and laity were varied (inconclusive).

C. Conclusion

The rate of response to the survey was high: the final total response rate—including both clergy and laity—was one of 40%. The greatest overall response was from Lutherans (72%); Episcopalians followed (54%), then Presbyterians (47%) and Methodists (46%). Catholics (at 43%) were among the bottom four groups of participants—along with the Orthodox (22%), Southern Baptists (17%), and Assemblies of God (10%). The least accurate of the statistical results are those for the Baptist laity and those for both the clergy and laity of the Assemblies of God.

A grand total of 370 persons participated in the survey (245 men, 125 women). Most of the respondents were over 30 years old; 42 were from minority groups. Most were college graduates and many had a graduate degree; the majority were married and made over $30,000 annually. Among the clergy, most were pastors; among the laity, most attended church at least once a week.

The results of the survey demonstrated six points on which there was great agreement among both the clergy and laity of all the denominations. (Among the clergy, the percentage of those who agreed to all six points was over 90%.) The percentage of agreement (clergy and laity) shown for each of the six points of general concurrence is indicated below:

1. 90% want the ecumenical movement to succeed.
2. 90% believe that Mary's faith is a model for all believers.
3. 87% believe in the Communion of Saints.
4. 82% believe in the virginal conception of Jesus.
5. 82% believe that the ecumenical movement is willed by Christ.
6. 82% believe that significant progress toward unity has been made recently.

In narrative form, the beliefs—about Mary and the ecumenical movement—of the large majority (between 64%-90%)
of the clergy and laity who participated in the survey could be summarized as follows:

The ecumenical movement should succeed because it is willed by Christ, and progress has actually been made in the past twenty-five years. Accepted strongly are the two doctrines of the virginal conception of Jesus and the Communion of Saints. By the same large majority, there is a belief that Mary has too great a role in the Roman Catholic Church and that women, in general, should be equal in all areas of church life. There is also agreement that Mary's faith, as portrayed in the Scriptures, is a model for our faith, and that religious medals and emblems are valid ways of expressing one's faith. There is a common belief that there will be some role for the Bishop of Rome, the pope, in the future structure of Christian unity.

A majority (51%-66%) of all respondents—clergy and laity—did not see Mary as significant in their churches or in their own personal lives, and they did not favor two Catholic Marian teachings, namely, the Immaculate Conception of Mary and her perpetual virginity. (This attitude toward the Immaculate Conception dogma was verified by the response to a second [control] statement describing its meaning without using the title; there was a mere 2% difference.)

The same majority did not look favorably on imaging Mary as spiritual mother or in asking Mary for her prayers, not even in asking her to join with their prayer. On the other hand, they did not think that having artworks of Mary in church or home necessarily leads to superstition.

From 18%-29% of the entire group of respondents were unaware of the meaning of or their own belief in the Assumption of Mary, her all-holiness, or whether she now enjoys the fullness of resurrection in body and soul (the latter formed a parallel control question regarding the Assumption).

There was a wide divergence between clergy and laity concerning the dogma of Mary as Mother of God and her all-holiness. The laity appeared closer to the beliefs of the ancient church than did the clergy.

Weighing the findings of this survey against the theme of this gathering of the Mariological Society of America has
brought about the following reflections. A new language would be helpful, not for replacing older terms but for clarifying their meaning for today. The three phrases from *Ut Unum Sint* which provided the title for this meeting—Mother of God, Icon of the Church, Intercessor—might be summarized in the three scenes of Mary's presence in the New Testament: Crib, Cana, and Cross. From this approach, a new ecumenical language could be derived, according to the following suggestions.

**Mary at the Crib:** The dogma of the *Theotokos* (Mother of God) might be better understood today by referring to Mary as the Virgin-Mother of Jesus, God-Incarnate.

**Mary at Cana:** The notion of Mary's intercession, which bears some negative feelings for some traditions, might be better described as Mary, Model of Prayer within the Communion of Saints. This reflects an area of agreement seen in the survey.

**Mary at the Cross:** Mary as Icon of the Church might be better referred to as Mary, Model of the Faith-filled Christian Community. This is a third area of agreement with reference to Mary borne out by the survey.

Using these notions and the suggestions for further discussion contained in *Ut Unum Sint*, one might develop a possible ecumenical statement of Marian identity and devotion that would read: Mary, the Virgin-Mother of Jesus, God-Incarnate, is to be honored and imitated as a model of faith and prayer in the Communion of Saints.

Because some of the artists who have collaborated on this "Ecumenical Portrait of Mary at End-of-the-century America" have meditated long and hard on the details that fit into the picture and others have only recently taken on the task, this portrait should not be considered a finished product. Rather, it is simply a foundational image to which refinements can be added through continued dialogue—similar to the effects produced by the creative vision and practiced hands of artists, each with their own unique vision of the finished work.

Indeed, any good art exhibit has fitting background music. As background music for viewing this portrait, I think that the basic ecumenical Marian prayer would have to be the *Magnificat*. Musical settings and varied translations can be found in
the contemporary Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist and Catholic hymnals.4

In the end, though, it is the main figure in the portrait—Mary herself—who, in a prophetic way, sings the message under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. She tells us that God has done great things for her and that all generations will call her blessed, but that God does not accomplish these things within a vacuum or separated from the realities of life. He takes care of the needy, while the mighty he tumbles from their thrones; he exults the lowly, keeping true to his promises from of old, which are ever new. We, too, can exalt in the Lord, for he has done great things for us, and his name is holy. In solidarity—within the Communion of Saints, Mary’s song becomes our song; for all that is revealed in Scripture is for our benefit. And we can sing it together, if we are open to letting her bring the Word under our roofs, leaping within us at the sound of her voice; and we can, therefore, reply—together with Elizabeth and without hesitation, being filled with the Holy Spirit, “Blessed is she who has believed” (Lk.1:45).

I hope that these forays into painting part of an ecumenical portrait of Mary will show her with lines and colors that strike the eyes of all Christians with the comfort of familiar images and the challenge of new ones.

4Samuel Terrien, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, brings out the ecumenical importance of this prayer in his recent book, The Magnificat: Musicians as Biblical Interpreters (New York: Paulist Press, 1995).