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Editor's Preface

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The 64th annual meeting of the Mariological Society of America (MSA) took place at the Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, May 21-24, 2013, with about sixty registered participants. Archbishop Dennis Schnurr welcomed the members of the MSA to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and to the Athenaeum of Ohio, the "graduate theology school that has been preparing priests, deacons and lay members to serve the Church since 1829." Archbishop Schnurr presided at our final Eucharist on Thursday, May 23, 2013, and he expressed his gratitude to the Mariological Society: "The Church is very blessed with your commitment to encourage studies in Marian theology and on the role of Mary in the Christian life."

The theme for the 2013 meeting was "Mary and New Evangelization." Since the 1974 Synod of Bishops and Blessed Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Evangelii nuntiandi*, evangelization has become part of the Catholic vocabulary. Evangelization, said Paul VI, is first directed to the Church: "[The Church] has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wants to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel" (15). Evangelization came at a providential moment in the Church's history. It was an invitation to the post-conciliar Church to rise above its introspective concentration on internal controversies and to share its faith in Jesus Christ with others. The call to evangelization was present in the messages of all the popes who followed Paul VI. In the words of Avery Dulles, "the popes of our time have correctly identified God's call to the Church in our day and have hit upon an effective remedy for the Church's present ills. The Church has become too introverted."¹

Saint John Paul II made evangelization a focus of his pontificate. In 1983, he began speaking about the new evangelization

¹ Avery Dulles, "John Paul and the New Evangelization," *America* 166, no. 3 (February 1, 1992): 52-59, 69-72 [here 71].

and the evangelization of culture. The new evangelization involved "ardor, methods and expressions" to proclaim the Gospel anew to those already evangelized. In *Redemptoris missio* (1990), he presented three phases or aspects of evangelization: (1) preaching to those who have never heard the Gospel (*ad gentes*); (2) preaching to those Christian communities where the Church is present and who have lost fervor in their faith; and (3) preaching to those Christian communities who have ancient roots but who "have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel" (33).

Pope Benedict XVI continued developing the themes of the new evangelization: the Church is called to evangelize by entering into dialogue with modern culture and analyzing the cultural crisis brought on by secularization. He also spoke of "reproposing" the Church's message. As explained by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, "repropose" meant that "Somehow in what we do and the way we express our faith, we 'repropose' our belief in Christ and his Gospel for a hearing among those who are convinced that they already know the faith and it holds no interest for them. For some who initially heard this incredible proclamation, the message has become stale and the vision has faded. The promises seem empty or unconnected to their lives."² Pope Benedict XVI established the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization on September 21, 2010, and indicated that the new evangelization be the focus of the next Synod of Bishops.

The presentations during this 2013 MSA meeting on Mary and the new evangelization did not propose an alternative or a separate approach to evangelization. Rather the presentations were the theological uncovering or rediscovery of the Marian dimension of the great mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church, especially the Church's maternal and evangelical character. In his presidential address, Fr. James Phalan encouraged "gathering in the Upper Room 'together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus' in order to pray for the Spirit and to gain strength and

² Cardinal Donald Wuerl, "Pastoral Letter on the New Evangelization," *Origins* 40, no. 16 (September 23, 2010): 241-250, here 242.

courage to carry out the missionary mandate." Evangelization, he said, requires an integration of theology, devotion, and culture, and an awakening of popular spirituality as found in pilgrimage, shrines, and Marian devotion. Mary, he said, is the model of that maternal love which is at the heart of the Church's existence; she is the Star of the New Evangelization. In Benedict XVI's words, she is the *Nexus mysteriorum*, the connecting point of all the mysteries of our faith. She calls and leads people out of the desert of today's world to the mysteries of life, of love, and of the truth and freedom found in Christ.

Sr. Chau Nguyen spoke of Henri de Lubac's influence on Vatican II, specifically his conception of the Church. There are striking similarities between Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* and de Lubac's chapter on the Virgin Mary and the Church in his *Meditations on the Church* (written in 1953). De Lubac's sacramental theology of the Church explains why *Lumen gentium's* final chapter on the Virgin Mary is not an addendum but rather an "apex and culmination of the Church's understanding of herself as mystery and communion By contemplating Mary's own faith and obedience, we enter more fully into the mystery of the Church."

Fr. Fred Miller spoke of Mary's spiritual motherhood and its relation to the new evangelization. His presentation included references to the evangelization projects carried out by the seminarians at Mt. St. Mary's (Emmitsburg, MD), which integrate prayer, proclamation, and charitable works. He called for a greater integration of Marian doctrine and themes into the major courses in the theological curriculum. He concluded by reminding us that it was Cardinal Leon Suenens who insisted that Vatican II's references to Mary's motherhood be related to the Church. It was, he noted, Fr. Charles Neumann, S.M., who, at the MSA 1986 meeting, in his commentary on *Lumen gentium* (articles 60 to 65), stated: "The Church looks to Mary as the model of the motherhood which they both share."³

Hans Urs von Balthasar's contribution to the new evangelization was developed by Dr. Patricia Sullivan. Referring to the

³ Charles W. Neumann, "Mary and the Church: *Lumen Gentium*, Arts. 60 to 65," *Marian Studies* 37 (1986): 141.

role of Mary in the Church, Balthasar wrote that "the radius of her circle [of influence] pervades all the others and includes them in itself. She is, in other words, coextensive with the Church, insofar as the Church is the Church of the saints, the 'bride without spot or wrinkle.'" Together with Mary, the saints have a significant evangelizing role. The saints echo and exemplify the many ways of living Mary's *yes*, an attitude which can be adopted and radiated by all the members of the Church.

The "good news" of the Gospel also includes dogmatic formulations. Dr. Richard Bulzacchelli spoke of Mary's Immaculate Conception as related to the mystery of the Church. In the Creed, we profess the holiness of the Church; in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception we profess the absolute sinlessness of the Virgin Mary. Mary's holiness is "the kerygmatic center" of both the Church's holiness and its indefectibility. The Immaculate Conception is the guarantee of both the faith of the Church and the faith of Israel; she is the one "so radical and uncompromising as to receive in its totality the whole eschatological promise of salvation."

Several presentations related the new evangelization to ecumenism, inculturation and the interreligious dialogue. Prof. Walter Sisto spoke of the Orthodox theologian, Sergei Bulgakov, and his insistence on the indispensability of the Virgin Mary in all ecumenical dialogues, a message not readily received in the early years of the ecumenical movement. As St. John Damascene had said that "Mary contains the whole mystery of the incarnation," so Bulgakov insisted that "There is no Christ without Mary . . . The presence of Mary assures the humanity of Christ and the corporate nature of salvation." Sisto noted that several Evangelical theologians are calling for a new reception of Mary. Christian doctrine must be connected to the Incarnation, the most central tenet of Christianity; without Mary, "Christianity is maimed."

Vatican II spoke about the kinds and causes of atheism, of the need for a "sincere and prudent" dialogue and of the response of a "mature and living faith." Dr. Peter Huff began by describing the extent and the reasons for contemporary atheism. It is nearly inexistent in countries such as Iran and Indonesia, while in Denmark and Sweden it numbers about 80% of the population.

Many factors may lead to atheism: inadequate and false images of God, the rejection of organized religion, the search for the meaning of life. There are various types of atheism: systematic and inchoate, rational and intuitive, coerced and chosen, dogmatic and relativist. Citing Michael Buckley, Huff said that "the most compelling witness to a personal God must itself be personal." Here he developed Mary's questioning, her pondering, her journey of faith, including the "dark night." Her experience of grief offers a personal witness and corresponds to the search and experience which many undergo today. Mary, designated as "she who believed" (Luke 1:45), is the person with "a living and mature faith."

Few could dispute the assertion of Cardinal Wuerl that "a tsunami of secular influence . . . has swept across the cultural landscape which has been unconsciously absorbed by many."⁴ Consequently, many regard freedom as absolute autonomy and independence. Dr. Maura Hearden spoke of St. John Paul II's personalist philosophy which takes into account the deep yearnings and longings to which humanity aspires. The human person is not self-determining but given existence and the capacity to attain freedom in conscious human activity. John Paul, especially in *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988), spoke of Mary's freedom. It is in the Trinitarian spirituality of communion and freedom that the desire for freedom and dignity can be satisfied. Mary's complete faith reveals her person and unlocks her humanity: in her complete giving, she is truly free.

Duc in altum is an expression frequently used by Saint John Paul II to express the confidence needed to embark on the new evangelization. Fr. Christopher Gillespie spoke of John Paul's reference to Mary as "spiritual mother" whose ongoing role "will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of the elect" (*Redemptoris mater*, 40). Mary is the star of evangelization as well as the model of discipleship: she provides the example of interiorizing and living the Word of God. She also serves as a model of inculturation of the Gospel. In *Ecclesia in America*,

⁴ "Cardinal Wuerl: 'Tsunami of Secularism Has Swept the Cultural Landscape: Archbishop of Washington, D.C., Discusses Hopes and Challenges of the New Evangelization,'" a Zenit article posted 10/08/2012. Available online at <http://www.zenit.org/article-35674?1> = english.

John Paul wrote that "America, which historically has been, and still is, a melting-pot of peoples, has recognized in the mestiza face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization." The Church exists to evangelize: may it do so with the same sense of urgency, faith, and prayer seen in the Virgin Mary.

Deacon Chao Doan spoke of the national shrine of Our Lady of La Vang in Vietnam. The shrine owes its origin to the apparitions of the Virgin Mary to persecuted Christians in Vietnam in 1789. At La Vang, Our Lady appeared in Vietnamese traditional dress and spoke the language of the people. She is a model of the inculturation capable of contributing to the inter-religious dialogue in Asia. Mary continues to draw Christians and non-Christians to La Vang and to her many shrines built by Vietnamese around the world.

Christen Almanzar, an American graduate student in Germany, spoke of the contributions of Fr. Joseph Kentenich and the Schoenstatt movement to the new evangelization. The consuming search for liberation and freedom in contemporary society can lead to resentment, division, and dehumanizing behavior. The spirituality of Schoenstatt, as found in Fr. Kentenich's writings, includes a process of "re-association with the self" and a "Marian self-education." The home shrine is a symbol of the community's beliefs and commitments, and, through the heart shrine, an individual enters a sacred atmosphere and becomes a member of a new spiritual family.

In his presentation on Mary's missionary charism, Fr. Johann Roten outlined the many intermediaries or ways through which the Marian evangelical message comes to us. It is first transmitted through the person of Mary and her role in salvation history, then through representations in our culture, through the witness of the saints, and through the founders of Marian organizations. The many cultural representations must be studied from different aspects: the sapiential, analogical, axiological, eschatological, ontological. These cultural models are transformative, based on an optimistic understanding of human nature, and contribute to the "new creation" brought about through Christ.

Finally, the “International Academic Marian Bibliography, 2012—2013” includes references not only as found in available research resources, but also from the European Mariological societies and journals whose articles usually do not find their way into the larger databases. Perusing the entries will show the varied approaches in Marian studies as found in different cultures; it will also indicate the abundance of materials from the Marian and Mariological societies.

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