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MARY AND THE EUCHARIST

The title assigned this paper, *Mary and the Eucharist*, would appear to offer itself more readily to homilizing or devotional exhortation than to theological reflection. Indeed, when one considers the great volume of writing on Marian themes, theological discussions of Mary and the Eucharist find a relatively minor place. It is, however, a conviction of the Catholic Faith that God's Revelation to us is "all of a piece" and that a more profound awareness of that Revelation can be had by a study of the interrelationship of the revealed mysteries with one another.¹ This being so, it is clear that a real connection does exist between Our Lady and the mystery of the Eucharist, and that the one mystery can serve to illuminate the other. Conveniently, the connection can be studied under two headings: liturgical and sacramental-sacrificial. We shall look at each in turn, although at the first only briefly.

I. Mary and the Liturgy

Thanks to *Marialis Cultus* of Pope Paul VI and to the subsequent commentaries on it, there has been ample treatment of Mary's role in the liturgical life of the Church as renewed by the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar publication of the various liturgical books. In that document, Pope Paul wrote, "In addition to its rich doctrinal content, the liturgy has an incomparable pastoral effectiveness and a recognized exemplary value for the other forms of worship." Indeed, the texts of the Breviary and the Sacramentary as revised are rich in doctrinal content in that which refers to Our Lady. Unfortunately, the pastoral effectiveness and exemplary value mentioned by the Pope have been blunted for the people of our own country and elsewhere by the inept translations of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). Since the positive as-

¹ Cf. Vatican Council I, *Constitution De Fide*, ch. 4: *D-Sch*, 3016.

pects of the liturgical reforms in respect to Our Lady have been elucidated elsewhere, I should like to consider the doctrinal value of the texts of the Sacramentary (and thus their pastoral effectiveness and exemplary value) by comparing them with the *Editio Typica* of the *Missale Romanum*.

Preface I of the Blessed Virgin Mary reads in the *Missale*: . . . *et, virginitatis gloria permanente, lumen aeternum mundo effudit, Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum*. The ICEL translation renders this as “. . . she became the virgin mother of your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who is forever the light of the world.” Since the allusion of the “*virginitas gloria permanente*” is to the virginal birth of Christ (the *virginitas in partu*) and not directly to the virginal conception of Christ, the reduction of the phrase to a title, viz., “virgin mother” captures the original allusion only inadequately, if at all.

Preface II of the Blessed Virgin Mary reads: *Vere namque in omnes terrae fines magna fecisti, ac tuam in saecula prorogasti misericordiae largitatem, cum, ancillae tuae humilitatem aspiciens, per eam dedisti humanae salutis auctorem, Filium tuum, Jesum Christum, Dominum nostrum*. ICEL translates: “What wonders you have worked throughout the world. All generations have shared the greatness of your love. When you looked on Mary your lowly servant, you raised her to be the mother of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, the savior of all mankind.” It should be translated as “Indeed you have done great things throughout the world and extended the bounty of your mercy to all ages, when, beholding the humility of your lowly servant, You bestowed through her the Author of our salvation, Jesus Christ Your Son, our Lord.”

The connection between the Incarnation and the great things which God has done is lost when ICEL changes the causal value of the “*cum*” and uses it temporally to begin a new sentence. In completely dropping out the “*per eam*,” the instrumentality of Mary in bringing about the great things for all ages is muted or lost.

Preface of the Assumption: The Latin reads: . . . *quae Filium tuum, vitae omnis auctorem, ineffabiliter de se genuit incarnatum*. The Sacramentary translation is: “. . . for she had given birth

to your Son, the Lord of all life, in the glory of the incarnation." In this way, the "*ineffabiliter de se*" is eliminated with its references to the ineffable mysteries of Christ's conception and birth.

The *Prayer for the Nativity of Mary* (Sept. 8) reads: . . . *ut, quibus beatæ Virginis partus exstitit salutis exordium, Nativitatis eius festivitas pacis tribuat incrementum.* The Sacramentary translates this as ". . . The birth of the Virgin Mary's Son was the dawn of our salvation. . . ." Now, "*salutis exordium*" means the "beginning of our salvation," not its dawn. If it had been correctly translated, the same Committee would not have faced the embarrassment of the Post Communion Prayer of the same feast which calls Mary herself or *her* nativity the "dawn of salvation" (. . . *de beatæ Mariæ Virginis Nativitate congaudens, quæ universo mundo spes fuit et aurora salutis.* ICEL translates this as "—at the birth of the Virgin Mary, who brought the dawn of hope and salvation to the world.").

The *Prayer Over the Gifts* for the same feast is among the poorest of the translations. The Latin says: . . . *Unigeniti tui, Domine, nobis succurrat humanitas, ut, qui natus de Virgine, Matris integritatem non minuit, sed sacravit, a nostris nos piaculis exuens, . . .* The Sacramentary translates: "Father, the birth of Christ your Son increased the virgin Mother's love for you. May his sharing in our human nature, . . ." The "*integritatem non minuit sed sacravit*" has become "increased the virgin Mother's love for you," even though these are the very words used by the Second Vatican Council to reaffirm the *virginitas in partu*, all notion of which is eliminated in the English.² The same Prayer is found in the first Common of the Blessed Virgin, and is identically mistranslated.

Prayer for the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows (Sept. 15): The Latin reads: . . . *da Ecclesiae tuæ, ut, Christi passionis cum ipsa consors effecta, . . .* The Sacramentary translates this as "May your Church be united with Christ in His Passion and death," thus dropping out completely the "*cum ipsa*" and Mary's role in objective redemption, as well as her exemplarity for the Church.

² Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, art. 57 and *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, vol. 3, Part 1, p. 369, no. 213.

Prayer for Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1): This reads in the original: *Deus, qui salutis aeternae, beatae Mariae virginitate fecunda, humano generi praemia praestitisti, tribue, quaesumus, ut ipsam pro nobis intercedere sentiamus, per quam meruimus Filium tuum auctorem vitae suscipere. . . .* It is translated: "God our Father, may we always profit by the prayers of the Virgin Mother Mary, for you bring us life and salvation through Jesus Christ her Son, etc." Clearly the whole sense is changed. The "*perquam meruimus*" is eliminated, apparently avoiding the "difficulties" involved in "meriting through Mary." All reference to her "fruitful virginity" is obliterated, and the "*ipsam pro nobis intercedere*" is rendered as "by the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

The decision to translate the word "*intercessio*" or one of its forms as "prayer" is not a singular occurrence. On the contrary, it must be seen as a deliberate intention of the ICEL translators, since every time the Latin "*intercessio*" occurs in a Marian context in the Sacramentary it is rendered "prayer" or "prayers." And this is done despite the fact that the Latin distinguishes between "*intercessio*" and "*prex, precis*," as can be seen by looking at the orations for the various saints in the *Missale*. This use of "prayer" for "intercession" occurs for the feasts of December 8, February 11, August 5, the Assumption, the Immaculate Heart, and the Presentation of Mary. In the case of the feast of the Holy Rosary, the phrase "*beata Maria Virgine intercedente*" is dropped completely and thus no reference at all is made to Mary in the Prayer of the Mass.

Post-Communion Prayer of Common I: This reads in the Latin: . . . *ut, qui de beatae Virginis Mariae festivitate laetamur, eiusdem Virginis imitatione, redemptionis nostrae mysterio digne valeamus famulari*. The English says: "may her faith and love inspire us to serve you more faithfully in the work of salvation." The rich possibilities contained in the notion "*imitatio Mariae*" disappear.

In summary, we note that in the ICEL translation of the Sacramentary:

1. every reference to the *virginitas in partu* is eliminated, except the generic title "virgin";

2. all direct references to Mary's instrumentality in the works of the Incarnation and Redemption (the various formulas "*per eam*," "*per ipsam*" and "*cum ipsa*") are eliminated;

3. it is decided that her intercession, despite contrary theological opinion, is limited to prayer;

4. her nativity is not recognized as the dawn of salvation, although the *Missale Romanum* says it is such.

Finally, it must be noted that the Latin words "*viscera*" and "*uterus*" are never translated at all. One can only guess that this was done so as not to offend Victorian sensibilities in our day and age.

It is useless to speculate on the reasons for the various mistranslations and omissions. They would run a spectrum from ignorance of the Latin language to manipulation of doctrine. What is not a subject for speculation, but is rather a clear fact, is the conclusion that the "rich doctrinal content" spoken of by Pope Paul in *Marialis Cultus* is substantially diminished. As a consequence, if these prayers are to serve an "exemplary value for other forms" of Marian devotion, then those forms will likewise be substantially impaired. In contradistinction to God Who saw fit to "sanctify, not diminish the integrity" of Mary, ICEL has managed not to sanctify but rather diminish the doctrinal integrity of the *Missale Romanum* in reference to Our Lady. And, thus, a consideration of the liturgical aspect of Mary and the Eucharist is, for all the positive things that must be and have been said elsewhere, marred by shadows and negativities.

II. Mary and the Sacrament-Sacrifice of the Eucharist

A. In her devotion to the Eucharistic Lord the Church has long sung:

Ave verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine;
 Vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine;
 Cuius latus perforatum vero fluxit sanguine;
 Esto nobis praegustatum mortis in examine.
 O clemens, O pie, O dulcis Jesu, Fili Mariae.

The thoughts of this hymn are far older than the fourteenth century which saw its publication. Already in 107, St. Ignatius

of Antioch, writing about the heretics of his day, noted that "they keep themselves away from the Eucharist and from public prayers, because they refuse to admit that the Eucharist is the same Body of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father later raised up in His goodness" (*To Smyrna*, 7). Following Ignatius, the Church's Magisterium repeated against Berengarius that the Eucharist "is the true Body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, which hung on the cross as an offering for the salvation of the world and which sits at the right hand of the Father." Aquinas, too, following St. Ambrose, taught the same truth when he wrote:

The change which takes place in this sacrament is not like any natural change, but is, rather, completely supernatural, effected by God's power alone. Therefore Ambrose says: "It is clear that the Virgin gave birth to Christ beyond the order of nature. And that which we consecrate is the body born from the Virgin."³

Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine. Here we have recalled the first link of Mary with the Eucharist. It is she who has provided flesh for our bread. "This bread is my flesh," He would say, "which I will give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:15). Mary's consent to the Incarnation of the Word is the condition which makes our eating possible.

As Pope John Paul II has not tired of pointing out in the Wednesday catechesis of these past years, God's relationship to His people is nuptial, spousal. He marries Himself to us. This is a truth evidenced long ago by the prophets of the Old Testament, Hosea in particular. But those Old Testament affirmations of a covenanted love must be viewed as only a courtship or betrothal in light of the mystery of the Incarnation. For it is at the Annunciation that God and man become two in one flesh. On this point, St. Thomas, again summarizing tradition, wrote: ". . . there is a certain spiritual marriage between the Son of God and human nature. And therefore through the Annunciation there was awaited the consent of the Virgin acting in the place of all of human nature."⁴

³ *SuTh*, III, q. 75, a. 4c.

⁴ *SuTh*, III, q. 30, a. 1c.

This nuptial relationship between the Son of God and those He came to save was indicated by the Savior Himself when He described Himself as the "bridegroom" in the midst of His followers (cf. Mt 9:15 and par.). St. Paul, following the Master, expounded the same teaching in his classic text on marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33. For Paul, this truth is not empty imagery. It rests on the reality of the Eucharistic flesh which we receive: "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (I Cor 10:17). The Eucharist thus becomes the prolongation of what the Word begins in Mary: the process of taking flesh to Himself—flesh for Himself in Mary; flesh to Himself by uniting His flesh to ours in Eucharistic Communion. The Eucharist is thus the literal fulfillment of the promise that, when lifted up, He would draw all things to Himself (cf. Jn 12:32). This union of two (and of many) in one flesh is mirrored by the marriage union of husband and wife but is of a transcendent order. As was true in Mary, so for us, it is a union of flesh and flesh achieved virginally.

The *Ave verum* can serve to indicate two other aspects of Mary's relationship to the Eucharist. She is, in the first place, the great defender of Eucharistic truth. All symbolism and false spiritualism is excluded when one recognizes in the Eucharistic species the very flesh which God has taken from her. Whatever must be said correctly about the qualities of the Risen Body of the Lord, one truth remains intact. What has risen from the tomb and what is in truth now our food is the *verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine*, the very Body born of Mary. It is not by accident that the Catholic Church and the separated Churches of the East, which have best maintained that truth intact, are marked by a fervent love for the One who gave Him our flesh.

In combatting the Eucharistic errors of our own day, Pope Paul VI insinuated this truth when he closed his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* with the prayer:

May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary from whom Christ Our Lord took the flesh which under the species of bread and wine "is contained, offered and consumed,"—intercede before the Father of mercies so that from this same faith in and devotion toward the Eu-

charist may result and flourish a perfect unity of communion among all Christians.⁵

In the second place, as the *Ave verum* helps to recall and as Pope Paul made explicit in the prayer just cited, Mary is the model of devotion for all who are called, imitating her, to receive the enfleshed Word. In an age of frequent Communion on the part of nearly all practicing Catholics, it is more than ever necessary to remember the required conditions for a worthy reception of the Most High. Those conditions have never changed substantially, and what the Decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* said of them in summary form is still valid.

. . . no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention can be prohibited therefrom. A right intention consists in this: that whoever approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but rather wishing to please God, to be more closely united with Him by charity. . . .

Although it is especially fitting that those who receive Communion frequently or daily should be free from venial sin, at least from such as are fully deliberate, and from every affection thereto, nevertheless, it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in the future; and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually free themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto.⁶

As reflective of Patristic thought, Augustine wrote that "what the Lord magnified in Mary was that she did the will of the Father, not that flesh begot flesh" (*In Job.*, X, 3). She desired and trusted Him before she gave Him our flesh. She, by His grace, merited to bear Him, as we say in the *Regina Coeli*. So, too, must we merit to bear Him if our union with Him is to make us one in mind, in heart and in affection with Him. As model and

⁵ *Living and Growing Through The Eucharist* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1976), p. 267.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

teacher, Mary reminds us that spiritual communion must precede our union with Him in the flesh.

B. Communicantes et memoriam venerantes in primis gloriosae semper Virginis Mariae, Genetricis Dei. . . .

"In communion with and venerating the memory in the first place of the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God. . . ." With these words of the Roman Canon we can be guided to another aspect of the mystery of Mary and the Eucharist. The communion spoken of in this prayer is, of course, a reference to the Communion of Saints, "whereby," as Paul VI wrote, "the life of each individual child of God in Christ and through Christ is joined by a wonderful link to the life of all his other Christian brothers and sisters in the supernatural unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, until, as it were, a single mystical person is formed."⁷ This communion is effected by our communion with the Risen Lord and is thus by its very nature Eucharistic (as St. Paul pointed out in the text already cited from I Cor 10:17: "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."). One of the implications of this communion is the exchange of spiritual goods which takes place among all the members of the Church. Traditionally, this exchange has been expressed in the teaching about the "treasury of merit," a doctrine well described again by Paul VI.

This "treasury" of the Church is the infinite and inexhaustible value the expiation and the merits of Christ our Lord have before God, offered as they were so that all of mankind could be set free from sin and attain communion with the Father. It is Christ the Redeemer Himself in whom the satisfactions and merits of His redemption exist and find their force. This treasury also includes the truly immense, unfathomable and ever pristine value before God of the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints. . . .⁸

⁷ *Apostolic Constitution Indulgentiarum Doctrina* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1967), art. 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Now we would be wrong to presume that this holy exchange takes place only through the acquisition of indulgences. It is a sharing of life and benefits which is constant for those in the state of grace and, here on earth, finds its root and culmination in the sacramental sacrifice of the Mass, which "contains the total spiritual good of the Church,"⁹ according to the teaching of Vatican Council II. This truth can only be fully appreciated when we remember that it is the whole Church which offers the Eucharist, thereby involving the whole "treasury of merit" in the Eucharistic action. This fact was pointed out by Pius XII in *Mediator Dei* when he wrote:

The sacred Liturgy is consequently the public worship which our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father as well as the worship which the community of the faithful renders to its Founder, and through Him to the heavenly Father. It is, in short, the worship rendered by the Mystical Body of Christ in the entirety of its Head and members.¹⁰

It is a truth repeated by the same Pope in *Mystici Corporis Christi*, #82 and by the Second Vatican Council in its *Constitution on the Liturgy*, #8. The clearest expression, however, is probably that given by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, #50.

Our union with the Church in heaven is put into effect in its noblest manner when with common rejoicing we celebrate together the praise of the divine Majesty. Then all those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and gathered together into one Church, with one song of praise magnify the one and triune God. Such is especially the case in the sacred liturgy, where the power of the Holy Spirit acts upon us through sacramental signs. Celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice, therefore, we are most closely united to the worshiping Church in heaven as we join with and venerate the memory first of all of the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, of Blessed Joseph and the blessed apostles and martyrs, and of all the saints.¹¹

⁹ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, art. 5.

¹⁰ Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, art. 20 (Washington, D.C.: NCWC, 1947).

¹¹ *Lumen Gentium*, art. 50. Translation is by Walter M. Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1967). Hereafter referred to as *Abbott*.

As offering of the whole Church, there is included in the Eucharistic celebration all that "treasury of merit" of the saints and of Our Lady in a unique degree. Thus, in the Eucharist we share their merits and hers, ever mindful that all of this comes from God in Christ, *de tuis donis ac datis*, as the *Unde et memores* of the Roman Canon says.

It is clear from such teaching that our Eucharist is a participation, a share in the Liturgy of heaven (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #8), and that the praise offered to the Heavenly Father in heaven is, like our own, hierarchical, in a hierarchy not determined by the Sacrament of Orders but by one's proximity in charity to Christ the One Priest. In this hierarchy, Mary's place is unique.

Redeemed in an especially sublime manner by reason of the merits of her Son, and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the supreme office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God. As a result she is also the favorite daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all other creatures, both in heaven and on earth.¹²

The role played by each member of the Body in that worship offered to God in heaven is a role congruent with that which they fulfilled here on earth. The Lord's own role in that worship is essentially linked with His perfect and all-sufficient self-offering on the Cross. It is that which the earthly Eucharist makes sacramentally present. But Christ has associated others with that mystery, and Mary especially so. She "was united with Him in suffering as He died on the cross. In an utterly singular way, she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls."¹³ And because the tie between Son and Mother is "close and indissoluble," as the Council teaches, she remains with Him—and because of Him and after Him—the chief offerer of that sacrifice which is made present in our earthly Eucharist. As it is the Lord who offers and is offered in every Eucharist, and Who, in and

¹² *Lumen Gentium*, art. 53, in *Abbott*, p. 86.

¹³ *Lumen Gentium*, art. 61, in *Abbott*, p. 91.

with Himself, offers the sacrifice of praise of His entire Body, so, in Him and with Him, Mary offers and is offered in each Eucharistic celebration in that utterly unique way which reflects her role in the Redemption her Son achieved for her and for all of us. This, I think, is the meaning of the "*communicantes in primis*" of the Roman Canon. The whole Church in heaven and on earth offers with and in Christ. "It is our mystery which is present on the paten and in the cup," as Augustine said—and uniquely it is Mary's.

It can be seen, I hope, from the above that this offering totally transcends that of the ministerial priesthood. Indeed, the ministerial priesthood exists to make this transcendent offering sacramentally present. Therefore, it is quite useless to attempt to describe Mary's role in the Eucharist in terms of ministerial priesthood. The ministerial priest, acting *in persona Christi*, operates in the order of the sacramental effectuation of the Eucharistic mystery; Mary operates on the level of the *realities* which are made sacramentally present in the earthly Eucharistic celebration.

Something of Mary's role as chief offerer of the Eucharist after the High Priest Himself is captured by the prayer which the Church invites both priest and faithful to say as a thanksgiving after Mass. As we find it in Appendix I of the Sacramentary, that prayer reads:

Mary, holy virgin mother,
I have received your Son, Jesus Christ.
With love you became his mother,
gave birth to him, nursed him,
and helped him grow to manhood.
With love I return him to you
to hold once more,
to love with all your heart,
and to offer to the Holy Trinity
as our supreme act of worship
for your honor and for the good
of all your pilgrim brothers and sisters.

C. "She is Mother to us in the order of grace."

These words of *Lumen Gentium*, #61, illuminated by Pope

Paul's proclamation of Mary as Mother of the Church at the end of the third session of Vatican Council II, must serve as guide for the final part of this consideration of Mary and the Eucharist. We say *must* because it is as Mother that Mary's dignity and role must always find its ultimate explanation. It is in her as Mother that the Eternal Word, by the power of the Spirit, takes His human origins, becoming her Son. It is in her, made fruitful again by the Spirit, that the members of Christ come to birth. All those who are children of God—"children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (Jn 1:13) are such only because they are members of Christ and, like Him, are conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

We have already referred to the teaching of St. Thomas which sees a certain mystical marriage as having taken place at the Annunciation—a marriage between God and humanity in Mary. As Aquinas saw it, this nuptial union is progressive; it did not end with the Incarnation. He makes this clear in his commentary on St. John's account of the marriage at Cana.

Through this marriage there is spiritually understood the union between Christ and the Church as the Apostle says in Ephesians 5:32. . . .

This marriage was initiated in the virginal womb when God the Father united human nature to the Son in a unity of Person. The bridal chamber of this union was the womb of the Virgin. . . . The marriage will be consummated when the Bride, that is the Church, is introduced into the bridal chamber of the Spouse, that is into heavenly glory.¹⁴

That Mary's role in this nuptial union does not end with her cooperation in the Incarnation, Aquinas makes clear from what follows.

In this spiritual marriage, the Mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, is present as the go-between of the nuptial rites, because by her inter-

¹⁴ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectura Super Evangelium S. Ioannis* (Rome: Marietti, 1952), caput II, lect. 1.

cession (the Church) is joined to Christ through grace . . .

“Mystice autem in nuptiis spiritualibus est mater Jesu, scilicet beata Virgo, sicut nuptiarum consiliatrix, quia per eius intercessionem coniungitur Christo per gratiam.”¹⁵

Several things are to be noted in these remarkable passages of Aquinas as exegete. Firstly, he refrains from calling Mary herself the bride. She is the bridal chamber, the Mother. That she can be described as Mother and Bride of Christ, as Scheeben and others wished, is probably correct, but Aquinas—and the Second Vatican Council—both avoid it. Secondly, Thomas calls Mary the “go-between,” the “consiliatrix,” of the spousal union which Christ progressively achieves with all those who will become one flesh with Him. I think it is fair to develop his notion of progressive union and Mary’s role in that on-going espousal by applying it to Mary’s role in the Eucharist.

As containing the “total spiritual good of the Church,” namely Christ Himself and the plenitude of merits of Mary and the Saints which He has produced and united to Himself, the Eucharist is the all-sufficient and chief means by which His members are joined to Christ.

Even there, then, Mary acts as “go-between” or “consiliatrix,” and thus her relationship with our Eucharistic celebrations is never sufficiently explained by her role in giving flesh to Christ, nor to the exemplary aspect of her faith and devotion, nor even to her role as offered and offering in and with her Son. She must be seen, as well, as exercising a continuing role—or causality, if we would introduce the technical word—in all that concerns the on-going espousal of the Word and humanity. In a general way this truth is a fixed part of Catholic doctrine and is taught by the Second Vatican Council.

This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross. This maternity will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. For, taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role, but

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, caput II, lect. 2.

by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation.¹⁶

How is one to explain this role in relation to the Mass? In part, we think, by employing the idea of nourishing, which is surely one of the functions of a mother. Mary nourishes her own. As she nourished the Child of her womb, so she nourishes those who are being born of her spiritually by providing them with the fruit of her womb. It is, of course, a subordinate role. It is Christ Who is our food; it is He Who gives Himself as our daily nourishment. But, as He associated her with Himself in giving Himself to the world and in giving Himself to the Father on the Cross, He likewise associates her with Himself in bestowing Himself to the Father and to us in the Eucharistic action.

If that is the case, the question arises: what kind of presence of Mary in the Eucharistic action makes such a role possible? This is a question raised, in analogous form, by Bishop Vaughan a year ago at the meeting of this Society in San Antonio. Speaking of Mary's Assumption, he said on that occasion:

. . . maybe the presence of her body in heaven now, when those of the other saints are not, has a special meaning of its own. Jesus' bodily presence in heaven makes possible the unique presence that brings Him into our tabernacles and onto our altars. That is a matter of faith for us. Perhaps, and this is a matter of pure speculation, the presence of Mary's body in heaven is tied in with the unique role that God has given her as Mother of the Church.

To put it in a more pointed form: Is there a presence of Mary as mystery in all salvific acts? I know many people might find that a little bit repelling, too strong. Yet, we have lived with centuries of writers, many of them saints, who maintained that all grace comes through Mary. Does that mean anything beyond intercession, in terms of her direct and immediate contact with us?¹⁷

If we may rephrase the question with specific reference to our own theme, we may ask: In her role as *conciatrix nuptiarum*,

¹⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, art. 62, in *Abbott*, p. 91.

¹⁷ Bishop Austin Vaughan, "The Assumption and Eschatology," in *MS 33* (1982): 159-161.

which finds its chief expression in the sacramental-sacrifice of the Eucharist, can we speak of a direct and immediate contact of Mary with us? I think the answer is "yes," even though one cannot have the assurance that a clear doctrine of the Faith gives on such matters.

On this question, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, citing a commentary of Fr. Hugon on a text of St. Louis de Montfort, wrote:

The exterior fecundity of the Divine Paraclete is the production of grace, not in the order of moral causality—for the Holy Ghost is not a meritorious cause or impetratory cause—but in the order of physical causality. To reduce this fecundity to act is to produce physically grace and the other works of holiness which are appropriated to the Third Divine Person. From this it follows that the Holy Ghost produces grace physically in souls by Mary. . . .¹⁸

In an extended Note, Garrigou-Lagrange attempts to explain the nature of this contact. It is certain, he wrote, that it is at the least what may be called "affective contact" by which a lover and beloved are present one to another even though spatially distant. As mysterious as this is, we are all aware of this type of contact and of its reality, evidenced in those cases of those who love deeply and who share true intimacy. On this reality rests, in part, St. Thomas' theory of knowledge by connaturality, and those unusual premonitions which lovers can have of each other, even when separated by great distances.

Normally, this contact must be nourished by at least occasional "contiguous" contact, that is, by the immediate contiguous presence of person to person. Between "affective" and "contiguous" contact, there can be inserted that form of contact called "virtual" whereby one acts on another without being physically contiguous. This can be seen in the case of the angels who, not having bodies, are nonetheless present where they act, thus virtually present. We can see it in the case of a telephone conversation, where physical contiguity is not achieved, but where two are present to each other virtually.

¹⁸ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Mother of the Savior* (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1959), pp. 210-211.

According to Thomistic teaching, the humanity of Christ has a direct physical influence on us as conjoined instrument of the Divinity. Through that Humanity, all grace comes to us. According to Garrigou-Lagrange, Christ's Humanity acts on us virtually. "It does not touch us," he wrote, "because it is in heaven."¹⁹ His statement, it seems to me, is not completely accurate, because it does not allow sufficiently for the unique contact achieved with the Lord in the Eucharist. Although not a contiguous contact in the usual sense of the word, it is more than the virtual contact which Jesus has with us in the other Sacraments; it is, indeed, quasi-contiguous because of His Real Presence in the Eucharist.

Mary's presence in the Eucharistic action, on the other hand, is what would be called virtual contact. As offered and offerer—the principal one in and after her Son, as Mother who endlessly bestows to us what God has given her, as "go-between" in the nuptial union of Christ and His Church, Mary acts and is present through her actions. How she is capable of acting in so many places at the same time is partially explained, I think, by considering the nature of the Eucharistic celebration itself. Its exterior, sacramental aspect—the level of *sacramentum tantum*—is multiform, happening in many places and at different times. But, in the reality of the Eucharistic action, the sacrifice of praise offered to the Father in heaven does not, properly speaking, come down to us. Rather, we are taken up into it. The sacramental action carried out here on earth is the very threshold into heaven. The temporal and the everlasting converge and meet. In what used to be called the *Infra actionem* of the Eucharist, we are actually "communicantes" with Christ, Mary and the angels and saints in a reality which is not earthly. At that point, more than at any other time, our lives are already "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Such is the truth perceived by all those who insist that there is only one Eucharist, although the appearances are many. In that sense, Mary's presence in each Eucharistic action is real, physical (because, of all the saints, only her body is

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 213.

in heaven), and unique (as Mother and Associate) in this memorial of our redemption.

The Sacramentary's Prayer to the Virgin Mary in preparation for Mass reflects this truth:

Mother of mercy and love . . .

you stood by your Son as He hung dying on the Cross. Stand also by me, a poor sinner, and by all the priests who are offering Mass today here and throughout the entire Church.

I think we can have the assurance that this prayer is answered affirmatively. The Mother of God stands by and with us in each Eucharist, offering to the Father and to us the fruit of her womb, the Price of our redemption.

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