

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION: Basically, most use of Scriptures by the Church is selective and often a difference between Protestant and Roman Catholics is not a lack of loyalty of either party to the Scriptures but a greater loyalty to some section of the Scriptures over others. (Brown, 374) Protestant favor Paul and Mark, Roman Catholics prefer Matthew and John.

A careful study of the New Testament reveals a development or unfolding of the Holy Spirit's revelation to the Church about identity and the importance of Mary. If one were only to judge by the earlier writings of the New Testament, a person might conclude that Mary was not too important. Paul hardly mentions Mary, and the Gospel of Mark, probably the earliest Gospel written (70 CE), presents Mary in a seemingly negative light, as one of Jesus' relatives who did not understand him or his mission. (Schreck, 166)

-**Paul's letters** are the undisputed oldest works in the New Testament (mid 50's). It is startling to find that Paul never mentions Mary! There is a reference to Christ who is God's son, **born of a woman**, born under the law. (Gal 4:4) Paul is talking about Christ who is human and Jewish. He is born of a "woman" and so is a human being. He is born under the Law and so is a Jew. The text never reflects on the mother of Jesus. Granted the dominant place of Paul in the Protestant mind, we get a sense of why Protestant thought patterns about Mary sometimes do not move in the same way as ours!

Actually, the only New Testament passages of Mary are in the four Gospels, plus one reference in the Book of Acts (before Pentecost, Acts 1:14). There is mention in Revelations, but as "Woman". It is even more sobering to find that in the first three Gospels, she appears only once during the public ministry. (Brown, 374-5)

-The **Marcan** (mid 60's CE) account of Mary is a very difficult one for Roman Catholics, Mark 3:31-35, "His mother and his brothers came..." The mother and the brothers, the family by birth, are **outside**. Jesus is **inside**. Jesus deliberately points to those inside. We are encountering the radicalism of Jesus. He comes among a people where everything depends on birth. One is a member of God's people by being born of a Jewish mother! For Jesus, not birth, but doing the will of God. **Mark does not exclude them** but distinguishes natural birth relation from these "new" family relations. Jesus' home was originally in the mountains of Galilee around Nazareth. Now he begins to use Peter's home. This is a **Marcan technique** of focus. One must admit that the only scene in Mark in which the mother of Jesus ever appears is not a scene that would incline one to develop a great devotion to the mother of Jesus. One reference is Mark 6:1-6, when Jesus goes back to Nazareth. "Well, now, where did this fellow get all this..." (Brown, 375-6).

Although Scripture is truly the Word of God, this word was phrased by human beings who dealt with certain issues and had limited perceptions. The insight that God was already at work in this woman in the conception of Jesus begins to transform the understanding of how Mary reacted to Jesus. In Matthew there is a moderate transformation, in Luke the transformation is dramatic. (Brown, 376)

Apparently the Holy Spirit, Mary's spouse, guided the authors of these Gospels into an understanding of Mary and her role that is fuller than the earlier New Testament writings. Catholics view this development as a work of the Holy Spirit. Later doctrinal definitions concerning Mary by Church councils and popes are a continuation of the Holy Spirit's work leading the Church into the fullness of truth about Mary and her role in God's plan of salvation. Mary's role in God's plan was prophetically foreshadowed in the Old Testament. IN the Book of **Genesis 3:15**, God tells the serpent, "I will put

enmity..." In the prophet **Isaiah 7:14**, he spoke of a sign that the Lord would give to Israel, "the virgin shall be with child..." (Schreck, 166-7).

-In **Matthew's** (70-80's CE) infancy story, Joseph is the main figure, while Mary is only mentioned in her role as the mother of the child through the **power** of the Holy Spirit. But still knowing that Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit causes Matthew to change Marcan ministry scene of the mothers and brothers (Matthew 12:46-50). In addition, in Matthew 13:53-58, son of a carpenter, leaving our "...among his own relatives". One begins to see how the Christian understanding of God's plan begins to color the picture of Mary. (Brown, 376)

Woman, this prolific word in the New Testament occurs 209 times. Besides its generic meaning, it also is used specifically to mean wife. In referring to Mary, it occurs 16 times!

Virgin, Mary, as a Jewish maiden, was definitely alone in her situation of being a virgin and realized there was nothing in and of itself from her culture and religion that made that a privileged state. It was the cult and mythology of the Greeks that brought a meaning to virginity having a particular effect on the gods because of self-sacrifice involved. The word virgin is used 15 times in the New Testament in comparison with the 51 times with which it is used in the Old Testament. The view that Mary continues to live as a virgin after the birth of Jesus is adopted only after 350 CE. Both of these evangelists, Matthew and Luke, derive their account of the virgin conception from Palestinian Christianity.

-**Luke's** (70-80's CE) infancy narrative concentrates totally on Mary. The story is told from her perspective, and of course, the central part of it concerns the annunciation and birth of the child. There follows the Visitation to Elizabeth where she is hailed as mother of the Lord. Mary's "Magnificat", reminds us of the centrality of Mary in the story. Mary is central in the presentation in the Temple and later in the finding of Jesus at age 12. Mary is constantly center-stage. We saw that according to the criterion of discipleship based on doing the will of God, the Lucan Mary becomes the first Christian disciple. Jesus' mother and brothers who stand outside are those who hear the word of God, do it, and thus are examples of what discipleship should be. In the Annunciation Mary was the first one to hear the word and to do it; she continues to be presented in the ministry as the example of those who hear and do. After the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus she is shown as having remained faithful, waiting for the Spirit. Thus, Mary serves as the most consistent disciple in the whole Gospel narrative. This is a tremendous development in the line of the New Testament reflection on Mary. The development comes after Mark was written and begins to move us toward what will happen in the subsequent Church.

-More evidence about this line of development may be found in **John** (90-100's CE) which goes its own way, presenting a tradition different from that in the first three Gospels. John is not interested in the natural birth of Jesus, and so there is no infancy narrative. The mother of Jesus appears in two scenes. At Cana, Jesus is in family. His mother, attending a wedding with Jesus' brothers (John 2:1, 12), puts a request, seemingly with an awareness of Jesus' extraordinary powers on which she places a family claim to help her friends who are out of wine. Although Jesus has rebuffed her family claim, she says to the waiters, "Do whatever he tells you". She gives priority to what Jesus wills, and so He goes ahead and performs the first of the signs that manifest His glory. The fact that Mary has faith and stresses obedience to His word means that her request becomes the occasion of the first of Jesus' signs that manifest His glory.

The later scene confirms that John intends her to be seen in a positive light where John brings the mother of Jesus to the foot of the cross (John 19:25-27). That scenario constitutes a radical departure from the common tradition of the other Gospels. In the Gospel of John there are four people at the foot of the cross, of whom the most prominent are the Mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. The Beloved Disciple is left nameless because he is to serve as a model for all those whom Jesus loves.

The language of the scene at the foot of the cross raises the issue of family relationship. John comes to the basic issue that the first three Evangelists treated in their sole Marian scene: Who constitutes the mother and brother of Jesus? By pointing to the two who stand at the foot of the cross and believe in Jesus, they are truly my mother and brother.

50's	Paul	Gal 4:4	Woman	neutral
60's	Mark	3:31-35 6:1-6	Mother Mary	negative neutral
70-80's	Matthew	Infancy 12:45-60 13:53-58	(Joseph as central) Mother Mary	neutral/positive neutral neutral
70-80's	Luke	Infancy 4:16-30 8:19-21	Mary (as central) (Joseph) Mother	positive neutral positive
90's	John	2:1-12 19:25-27	Mother Woman	negative/positive positive
100's	Revelation	12:1-18	Woman	positive

PART TWO

In the first part was presented the gradual development through Scriptures of the Church's thought on Mary in the salvation plan of God. We also talked about Mary as "Mother" and Mary as "Virgin". Before we talk about the next section on Mary in John's Gospel and the Early Church, let us present two main developments of the Church concerning Mary: the Immaculate Conception and her Assumption.

-Concerning the **Immaculate Conception**, the objections of Aquinas and others were perfectly valid: every human being needs the grace of Christ; if Mary was conceived without sin in such a way that she did not need the grace of Christ that would be a denial of the Gospel. Duns Scotus was able to win the day because of this insight that the Immaculate Conception came through God's application of the grace of Christ beforehand. Our belief is that every human being through faith and through baptism is freed from sin through the grace of Christ. This is a basic privilege of disciples. We claim only that Mary was the first one to whom this was done; for according to God's plan, it was done even before she was conceived. She is the first one to receive a basic consequence of discipleship that all Christians receive. That is harmonious with Luke's notion that she was the First Christian.

-As for the **Assumption**, leaving aside minor disputes about Mary's death, we take it to mean that Mary has experienced the resurrection of the body promised by Christ. Every Christian is to be raised from the dead—whatever that may mean precisely. We Catholics believe that this happened in Mary's case first of all by anticipation. One more, she was the first one to receive a common gift from discipleship because she was the first disciple.

-Mary at **Calvary**. Jesus said to his mother on Calvary, "Woman, behold your son" and to the disciple, "Behold your mother" (John 19:26-27). He is making his mother the Mother of all the faithful. The beloved disciple here is seen as a symbol of all the disciples, indeed a symbol of the whole Church. Mary is given a special role in the birth and development of all the redeemed.

Jesus' brief statement to his mother from the cross was like reading of a will, for in an oral culture the last testament is spoken before a person dies and in the presence of witnesses. In doing this, Jesus acted the dutiful son. However, he was also the savior and wished to involve his mother actively in the process of salvation.

-Mary's role at **Cana**. Hearing herself addressed as "Woman", Mary must have remembered the wedding at Cana where Jesus also called her by that rather startling title. When she told Jesus there was no wine he replied, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:3-4). Mary, in turn, demonstrates her ability to influence the life and ministry of her son. His earthly mother interceded with him at Cana to begin that ministry by performing a sign. She wanted his messianic work to be revealed. Jesus perfectly understood what she meant. Their communion as mother and son assured that kind of understanding.

If Jesus had addressed her as "Mother", he would only have referred to her physical parentage. By speaking to her as "Woman", he elevated her to a maternal role in the history of salvation. His use of the word "Woman" guides our minds back to the Book of Genesis and the creation of Eve who is called "Woman" (2:23). Jesus wants his mother to be a new Eve who is to help bring forth the new creation that we know as the Church. As Eve was the woman-mother of all the living (3:20), Mary would be the woman-mother of all believers. He spoke to her spiritual motherhood that made her solicitous for the needs of all people, especially for their salvation.

When Mary again heard her son call her "Woman" at the cross, she recalled that formal beginning of the salvation process at Cana. She now knew the hour of salvation's realization had come. The two settings—Cana and Calvary, the wedding and the deathbed—are like an altarpiece; twin art works that belong together and have a unified message. Cana invites us to think of Mary as an intercessor, Calvary moves us to invoke her as our mother.

-Mary in the **Upper Room**. The second time we see Mary at intercessory prayer is in the Upper Room with the 120 disciples of Jesus during the nine-day "novena" before Pentecost. For these few days, Mary is a public figure. All the disciples can behold her prayer witness. She leads them for she is more experienced in faith than all of them put together. More practiced in prayer, she is like a new Ark of the Covenant bearing the radiance of Christ's presence.

Just as Mary was present at the conception and birth of Jesus, so she was present at the birth of the Church. As she bore Jesus in her womb and nurtured him, so she is to help bear the Church into life and holiness. AS the Church came to birth, its members stood next to Mary, the first believer in Jesus. They prayed with a woman who already had a faith pilgrimage of more than 45 years behind her. As Abraham became the father of faith for the people of the first covenant, Mary became the mother of faith for the members of the Christian covenant.

-Mary at **Ephesus**. Tradition maintains that John the Beloved brought Mary with him to Ephesus when he moved there. The "House of Mary" is now a place of pilgrimage in Panya Kapulu in modern Turkey. It rests on a hillside overlooking the ancient city of Ephesus. Her home is a small fieldstone chapel visited by pilgrims, including Moslems who venerate Mary.

Arriving with John at Ephesus, Mary would have seen the forth-largest city of the Roman Empire. Soaring above the city was the temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The temple building covered an area larger than a football field. The temple housed a stature of Diana, the fertility goddess of Asia Minor. Mary could not have missed the many small gold and silver replicas of Diana displayed for sale throughout the city (Acts 19:23-40). The statues represented Diana as a many-breasted figure, wearing a high crown decorated with the sign of the seasons. A purchaser would place the little statue in the temple and provide an endowment to keep it polished. On Diana's birthday, these statues were paraded through the city to the theater. The historical context cannot be lost on us: Mary,

the fruitful spiritual mother of Christians, moving to a home overlooking a city that worshiped a pagan fertility goddess.

Her deep prayer was the music that accompanied the Scriptural writings of John and the evangelization ministry that brought Paul to Ephesus for two years.

Mary's prayer would be the source of blessings for the living Church, surely linked to the Spirit's gift to Paul when he wrote his majestic epistle to the Ephesians, celebrating the truth that Christ's love makes possible the unity of all people regardless of their gender or ethnic origins.

-Theotokos (God Bearer). If Mary had been given the gift of looking into the future—say, 400 years ahead—she would have seen, as she gazed into the future era, a church building that had been an Ephesian conference center for the scholars in her own lifetime. She would have heard that they renamed this center the "Mary Church", the first known church edifice to bear her name. She would have observed a bustling assembly of over 200 bishops gathered there to discuss her maternal relationship to her son.

In June 431, an ecumenical council was held there. Bishop Cyril came from Alexandria and Bishop John from Antioch. Pope Celestine in Rome sent two representatives. Augustine planned to come but died before the Council began. This larger body of bishops journeyed to Ephesus to celebrate their faith in Mary as "Mother of God". Traditional Christian prayers addressed Mary with this title, but Nestorius the Archbishop-Patriarch of Constantinople challenged this usage.

At Ephesus, the council fathers met this challenge. At stake was the central Christian truth that the man, Jesus, son of Mary, is also truly the Son of God. The council affirmed that Mary may rightly be called the Mother of God (Theotokos or God Bearer). The son of Mary is one person, the Son of God, the Emmanuel. Bishop Cyril spoke the faith of the Church when he said: "If we are to confess the Emmanuel is truly God, we must also confess that the holy Virgin is the Mother of God, the Theotokos, for she bore according to the flesh, the Word made flesh."

-Mary, the Model of Love. We have been told often enough that love is a decision, not just an emotion. If love depended only on feelings, there would not be much loving, because feelings come and go and negative feelings would drive us away from a needy person who is unattractive to us. Real love does not bother with reasons for loving others, but puts a lot of effort into finding ways to love people. The best love is a decision rooted in faith in God.

Mary practiced "letting-go" love. Human development expert Erik Erikson says that growth involves a crisis in which one experiences both identity loss and identity gain. Each time we gain in love, there is some kind of loss. At Cana Mary had to do what every mother must face, let her son go off to his chosen career. Mary not only let him go, she encouraged him to do so. She faced the letting go that true love requires.

The cross challenged her to let go in a way she would not have anticipated. No mother wants to let her son die. When the knife of the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus, Mary felt it plunging into her own as well. When Jesus committed her to John's care, she heard him saying, "It is time for you to release me, to let me go into death".

Whatever interior struggle she experienced then remains private. The communion between herself and her son rests in impenetrable silence. We may correctly conclude, however, that she surrendered him then. She let him go. Love can do no other.

-Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico. In the Indian portrait of the Lady there was a sense in which the Indian people could say to themselves: we have not been annihilated. Although we have been reduced to slavery, this new religion preserves old religious symbolism and gives us some continuity and survival.

In the Indian tradition, when Mary appears in the ancient garb of the mother of the Indian gods, she promises to show forth love and compassion, defense and help to all the inhabitants of the Land. Ten years before the whole Indian nation, their gods and their tradition had been torn down. She hears

their lamentations and remedies their miseries, their pain and their sufferings. In their devotion to the Lady, the Christian Gospel proclaims hope for the oppressed.

When one looks at the first chapter of Luke, one realizes how authentic a Gospel hope that is.

The angelic message to Mary identifies Jesus as Son of David, Son of God; but then Mary goes forth and explains her interpretation of it in a hymn, the Magnificat. She does not proclaim the good news by saying that the Son of David and the Son of God is here. Rather, her soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God her savior, because he has regarded the low estate of his slave woman. The Good News to Mary about Jesus means God has put down the mighty and exalted the lowly.

In Luke 6:20-26, Jesus does not come proclaiming "I am the Son of God", but Blessed are you poor. The Gospel of God's Son means salvation for those who have nothing.

Our Lady of Guadalupe gave the hope of the Gospel to a whole people who had no other reason to see good news in what came from Spain. In their lives the devotion to Our Lady came constituted an authentic development of the Gospel of discipleship.