



# *Marian Doctrine and Devotion*

## Chapter 15



Marian devotions are those prayers and acts undertaken to honor Mary and with the intent of seeking her intercession with her Son, Jesus, and his Father. Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not, however, amount to worship - which is reserved for God alone. Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed a three-level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* that applies to God, the Virgin Mary and then to the other saints.

The Roman Catholic Church holds many teachings associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Four of these specific doctrines have been raised to the level of dogma, meaning in technical terms that they must be held by the faithful as essential to participation as Roman Catholics. The four Marian dogmas have been defined by the magisterium over the course of Christian history, using both Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the two elements of the one source of Revelation, as evidence for these proclamations. These four dogmas are: Mary the Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity of Mary, The Immaculate Conception, and The Assumption of Mary into Heaven. The twentieth-century has seen a significant drive to establish a fifth and final Dogma-Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

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### At the First Pentecost:

Pius XII, Encyclical on Mystical Body, AAS 35, 248: "She it was who, by her most powerful prayers, obtained that the Spirit of the Divine Redeemer, already given on the Cross, should be given to the newborn Church on the day of Pentecost, along with abundant gifts."

John Paul II, General Audience of January 28, 1988: "Mary, who 'kept these things in her heart' (cf. Lk 2:19) could bear witness, after Christ's death and resurrection in regard to what concerned herself and her role as Mother, precisely in the apostolic period when the New Testament texts were being written and when the early Christian tradition had its origin."

**Comment:** Before the coming of the Holy Spirit, during the long nine days, it may well have been that the Apostles were inclined to lose heart—they had shown their weaknesses before, and yet at this point, had not yet received the strength of the Holy Spirit. So it is likely enough that she had to reassure and encourage them to persevere doing that novena.

What Gifts were given at Pentecost? To the Apostles were given the gift of tongues, a charismatic grace. The Apostles also received Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the sanctifying category, which gave them courage and understanding they had previously not had.

The gift of tongues given to the Apostles seems different from that claimed by modern charismatics. For the moderns—and also those of whom St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor 12-14—do not understand what they are saying, unless there is an added different gift of interpretation. But the Apostles clearly understood what they were saying on Pentecost. Even so, we must ask: Did the Spirit give the Apostles the power to speak various language themselves so that the Apostles understood their own words, or was there, as it were, translation in the air before their words reached the crowds? We do not know.

We inject a comment: modern charismatics are apt to claim that their special phenomena are simply actuations of the Gifts of the Spirit, which all Catholics have: therefore, all Catholics should be charismatics. But this is not true for two reasons: 1) The gift of tongues belongs to the charismatic type of graces—Gifts of the Holy Spirit belong to the sanctifying category. Something from one category cannot actuate something from the other. 2) The claim neglects the diversity of spiritual attractions: The basic principles of the spiritual life are the same for all. But on a secondary level, the approach, there is room for great differences. We think for example of St. Francis de Sales, a refined gentlemen, in contrast to St. Benedict Joseph Labre, who lived like a tramp, probably had body lice. Or we think of St. Francis of Assisi who, according to one account was reluctant to let a brother have even one book—in comparison to St. Thomas Aquinas who did nothing but soak in books. All four of these Saints followed the same basic rules—but their approaches were different. It is spiritually harmful to ignore this principle and to try to force all into one mold. The Spirit does not do that.

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Therefore we also ask: Did Our Lady receive the gift of tongues? There is no mention in the Acts of the Apostles. It was not needed for her role on Pentecost or otherwise. We saw above in considering the graces given her at the Immaculate Conception, that we have no evidence she received the charismatic type of graces, which do not sanctify. Further, 1 Cor 14:34 says strongly: "Women must be silent in the Church." Our Lord did not make her a priest, nor does it seem she ever addressed the assembly, though of course she did give information especially on the early life of Jesus privately to the Evangelists and others, as John Paul II said in a document cited above.

What are the sanctifying Gifts of the Holy Spirit? They are added faculties, added to the structure of infused virtues, which enable the soul to receive

the inspiration sent in His own special way by the Holy Spirit. They can give infused contemplation as well as guidance. But for the present we consider their role in guidance.

A soul may follow any of three spiritual guides:

- (1) the whim of the moment. Aristotle in Ethics 1. 5 calls this a life fit for cattle, who also do just as they happen to feel like doing.
- (2) reason, which even if the recipient is not aware of it, is aided by actual graces which God gives generously.
- (3) The Holy Spirit through the Gifts.

When a soul operates on the second level, its work is often discursive, i.e., from one step to another in reasoning. For example if I decide I have sinned and should do penance, first I ask: How much have I sinned?—How much is needed?—what penance will fit with the duties of my state in life?—with my health? And so after several steps the soul reaches a decision. But when guidance is received via the Gifts, there is no such discursive process: as it were, the answer is dropped ready made into the mind. This of course leaves opening for much subjectivity and even deception. But there is help: 1) Well developed cases of such guidance do not appear until the soul is very far advanced in the spiritual life. 2) When they do appear they come in one of two forms: (a) if there is time to consult a superior or director, the guidance leaves one a bit uncertain, a signal the soul should consult. (b) In the less common case where a decision must be made on the spot, and there is no chance to consult, they may give certitude.

Why do souls not experience more of this guidance? It is because of their lack of receptivity, coming even from subconscious reluctances to do certain things. But our Lady was never held back by such things. She was always most perfectly faithful and responsive to the Spirit, who is therefore called her Spouse. St. John of the Cross writes well of souls on that high level (Ascent of Mt. Carmel 3. 2. 10 and Living Flame 1. 4): "... God alone moves the faculties of these souls to do the things that are right according to the will and arrangement of God, and they cannot be moved to do others... Such were those of the most glorious Virgin, Our Lady, who, being raised to this high state from the start, never had the form of any creature imprinted in her soul, or was moved by such, but was always guided by the Holy Spirit."

Hence St. Louis de Montfort wrote (True Devotion §36): "When the Holy Spirit, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there, He enters there in His fullness, He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which it makes room for His Spouse."

St. Maximilian Kolbe, a few hours before his final arrest on Feb. 17, 1941, wrote a splendid commentary: "Who is the Holy Spirit? The flowering of the love of the Father and the Son. If the fruit of created love is a created conception, then the fruit of divine Love... is necessary a divine 'conception.' The Holy Spirit is, therefore, the 'uncreated eternal conception'... This eternal 'Immaculate Conception' (which is the Holy Spirit) produces in an immaculate manner divine life itself in the womb (or depths) of Mary's soul, making her the Immaculate Conception [for thus she named herself at Lourdes]. If among human beings the wife takes the name of her husband because she belongs to him, is one with him... and is, with him, the source of new life, with how much greater reason should the name of the Holy Spirit, who is the divine Immaculate Conception, be used as the name of her in whom He lives as uncreated Love, the principle of life in the whole supernatural order of grace" (Cited from H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit, Prow Books, Libertyville, 1977, pp. 3-5).

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