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# *Marian Mariology*

## CHAPTER 42



The veneration of Mary, when properly understood, permeates the entire life of the Church; it is a dimension of dogma and of piety, of Christology and of ecclesiology. This dimension needs to be made explicit today in connection with the problems of humanity. Mariology expresses something fundamental to the Christian life itself, to the Christian experience of the world.

Sound Mariology has always been understood in Christological terms. If the Gospel revealed nothing more than the fact that Jesus Christ, God and man, was born of Mary, this alone would be sufficient for the Church to love her and to draw theological conclusions from pondering this relationship of Mother and Son. We need no other revelations. Mary is a self-evident and essential *datum* and dimension of the Gospel.

Chapter one centers on Catechesis flowing from Byzantine Marian spirituality with commentary by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M. Chapter 2 discusses Mariology today with commentary by Rev. Professor Michael Lapierre, S.J. The remaining chapters are commentaries on various Marian topics by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. (1914– 2000).

## Chapter 42

### Living in True Devotion to the Divine Maternity

*by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.*

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Having spoken of Our Lady's life and mission, we now want to consider our own response to her Divine Motherhood. How can we fittingly live in devotion and gratitude to Mary?

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is one of the cardinal features of a Catholic. And this devotion to our Blessed Mother must go far deeper than affective feeling. We can look at and check our devotion to Mary on six norms: the one who is devoted to our Blessed Mother thinks of her, reads about her, talks about her, speaks to her, invokes her and tries to imitate her.

First, if we are devoted to Our Lady we think of her, for we instinctively think about, and of, the people that we admire and love. In order to think of Mary we need reminders of her in our lives. It may be a picture or a symbol or the bent-in-half 3 x 5 card, like the one on my desk next to the telephone, with the inscription: "*Mary, teach me to know the will of Jesus.*" Whatever means we use, we have to make a real effort to think of her, who under God and after the Son of God is the most important person on our road to the destiny for which we have been made, until it becomes habitual.

Secondly, a person who wishes to cultivate a strong devotion to our Lady reads about

her. Read about Mary in the Scriptures, in the lives of the saints, in the stream of literature about Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, La Salette and Beaurang. Our Lady wants her name and her mission in the world to be better known and more honored, so that her love and the love of her Son will live more deeply in the hearts of men.

Third: talk about Mary. What we think and read about should give us much to talk about; what is on the mind and in the heart will inevitably be on the lips. I recommend Marian discussion groups where we can come together to ask questions, to present a thesis or a problem and then have others share in talking about Mary.

Our Lady wants to be talked about, that is why she keeps coming in our midst so often. Parents should talk about Our Lady to their children. That is how my mother got me started and why over the years since childhood I have made every Saturday a day of abstinence in Mary's honor.

Fourthly, one who is devoted to the Mother of God speaks to her. No speeches, just plain conversation. This is very pleasing to Our Lady and honors her Son. Speaking to God is of course the top priority in our prayer life, to God and to the Son of God made Man. But we are human; we all know what it means to have a mother. Speaking to a mother as we do, about anything and everything that is on our minds, can take up those "slacks" in our day. I hate to think what is on most peoples' minds most of the time! My calculated guess is that most people most of the time are talking about themselves! Talking to Mary will not only help break through the crust of this egoism to which we are all so pathetically prone, it will also keep us in contact with that person who, after God, is the most important mediatrix on the way to our salvation.

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Fifth: The one who is devoted to Our Lady invokes her. You notice that I distinguish between speaking to Mary and invoking Mary. When we *speak* to her we share with her what is on our minds and in our hearts; when we *invoke* her we ask for her help. This, I dare say, is the most familiar and common form of conversation and it is part of the daily life of every Catholic if they have the habit of reciting the Rosary. I recommend that each one of you pray the Rosary daily. You can pray it piecemeal, if necessary, a decade here and a decade there, you can pray it while driving. I pray mine, among other places, while waiting on the subway! But pray it! Mary does listen to our requests, even the trifling ones, as Cana for all times symbolizes. We need Mary, and the word is we NEED her! This need, as faith tells us, in the supernatural order is every bit as complete as we need a woman to bring us into this world. Mothers tell me they never cease mothering their children, no matter what their age. "*He needs me,*" they say. We need Mary! And she, as a woman, knows how to provide us with her maternal care.

Finally, a person devoted to Our Blessed Mother strives to imitate her. Instinctively, the more sensitive we are to a mother's love the more we strive to become like her. Among the virtues that we should specially try to imitate in Our Lady I would place her simplicity somewhere near the top. And what does it mean to live a Marian life modeled on the simplicity of Our Lady? It means first of all no pretense. True greatness does not parade itself. The simplicity of Our Lady is putting on no airs; it is being ready for any service, and labor. No vanity. No display. No artifice.

Saints tell us that no one devoted to Mary will be lost. This must be true. I make bold to say that devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a mark of predestination. It is a sign that we are pleasing to Jesus, because Jesus, as any loving son, loves those who love His mother.

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