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Liturgical

flame

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ST. STEPHEN THE MARTYR
LITURGICAL MINISTERS

Mary—Mother of God and Church part 2

The following article was written as a 2 part explanation of Marian devotions. The first part of this article can be located on the Stephen.org website under Liturgy where all previous editions of the liturgical flame remain.

In 1942, Pope Pius XII who promoted Marian devotions more than any other Pope in history consecrated the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 1954, he also defined another Marian dogma, the bodily “Assumption of Mary” into heaven which is celebrated on August 15. The timing of this definition was right because the human race had just witnessed two world wars, the horrors of the concentration camps and how devalued human beings had become. This declaration served as a reaffirmation of the dignity of the human body and the belief in the resurrection of the body – that the human body is holy enough to be in the presence of God forever, and what God did for Mary, God does for us because that is what we believe when we profess the Creed. This definition opened up so many questions and differences in interpretation. Did Mary die at all? What was the manner of her death? Protestants rejected this doctrine, but the Orthodox welcomed it because it is also the *Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (The Falling Asleep of Mary) which they believed for centuries. On May 31, 1954 Pope Pius established another Marian feast, the Queenship of Mary and declared that year a Marian year in celebration of the centenary of the Immaculate Conception.

At the beginning of Vatican II, most catholic theologians prepared the way for a new turn in Marian teaching and devotion – one that is more *biblical, Christocentric, ecclesial and ecumenical*. They situated Mary’s role in the context of the mystery of salvation in Christ and the mystery of the church. Vatican II affirmed Mary as the mother of God, mother of the Church and mother of the Redeemer who surpasses all other creatures, and at the same time belongs to the offspring of Adam and is one with all human beings in their need for salvation” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church 53).

In 1974, Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation, *Marialis Cultus* (For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary) issued some guidelines for Marian devotions drawn from the *sacred scripture*,

liturgy, ecumenism and anthropology. First, every Marian devotion (prayers and songs) should draw their inspiration and wordings from the bible, and should clearly express Trinitarian principles – that all catholic prayers should be addressed to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They must also have Christ centered messages, because this will make our Marian devotions more solid (30). Secondly, “Marian devotions should harmonize with the Liturgy and not mixed in some hybrid form.” No novenas or similar practices of piety should be inserted into the very celebration of the Eucharist, because it blurs the Eucharist as the center and summit of Catholic gatherings. The implication being that no one must pray the rosary during Mass – a mistake made by many Catholics in previous years (31). Thirdly, for the sake ecumenism and Christian unity, “every care must be taken to avoid exaggeration which could mislead other Christians about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church” (32). In other words, our non-Catholic brothers should not have any reason to doubt that in our devotions to Mary, Jesus Christ always remains our sole mediator with God. Finally “devotions to Mary must pay close attention to the findings of the human science because some pictures of Mary in certain literature cannot be reconciled with today’s life style.” The scripture tells us that Mary was a true disciple, and teacher. And when she heard the word of God she acted on it. She was “far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others. On the contrary she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged positions (cf. Luke 1:51-53)” (n.37) – a position also shared by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, the *Redemptoris Mater* (*Mother of the Redeemer*) which reemphasizes Mary’s bond with Christ and the church, especially the Poor.

Does one have to believe in Mary in order to be a Catholic? First of all, the Catholic Church does not teach that membership in the church is restricted to those who formally or explicitly accept all teachings about Mary or Marian devotions, yet it is one of the marks of catholic identity. These teachings are not so central to Catholic faith that the faith will crumble without them. Such would be the case if one were to deny the

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divinity of Christ or the redemptive value of his death and resurrection. What we must believe to be catholic is contained in our Creed that was beautifully articulated for us by the Council of Nicene in 325 AD, which we also pray at Sunday Liturgy. Secondly, devotions to Mary and to all of the saints are ultimately devotions to Christ, whose grace transformed Mary and the saints. Jesus Christ is our sole Mediator and Redeemer (not Mary). In Jesus we are forgiven our sins for He is full of mercy and compassion. In fact Mary is before all else, one of the people Redeemed by Christ. Her exemption from original sin does not mean she was not in need of Christ's redemption; rather she was full of grace solely because of the redemptive work of Christ on her behalf. However belief in Mary is one of the marks of Catholic identity because no one who truly loves Jesus and believes in him would reject his mother, whom He also gave to us to be our mother and model. Mary's intercessory power is real. She is one with the church from the beginning and intercedes for us in the presence of her son as she did at Cana. In fact neither the Gospel nor the past Christian traditions have been able to separate Mary and the church, hence the protestant Monk of Taize, Max Thurian says, "To speak of Mary is to speak of the Church. The two are united in fundamental vocation – maternity" (Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church, p.9).

Furthermore, devotions to Mary or to the saints are private devotions and not central to Catholic faith. This means that one is not required to believe in apparitions, visions or other unusual occurrences attributed directly or indirectly to Mary. They are not essential to Catholic faith whether they are officially approved by the church or not. If they have any authority at all, that authority is restricted to those

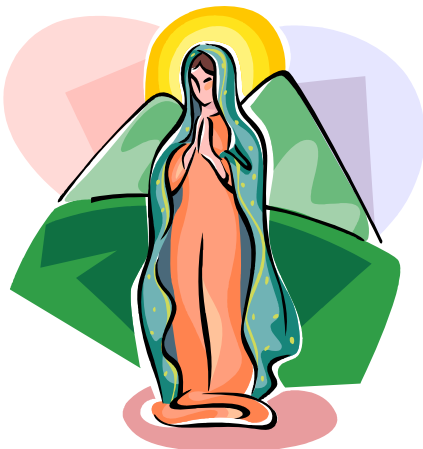
who directly and immediately experience them. While they may be extremely helpful to spiritual growth, no one is bound in conscience by whatever is communicated in them. The contents of such phenomena cannot be placed at the same value with the Gospel in terms of their authority or demands and should not contradict the essential components of the Catholic faith.

In the end one must know that devotions to Mary are characteristically a Catholic phenomenon because it expresses three fundamental principles of Catholicism: *the principle of mediation*, because we believe that the universe is mediated, primarily through Christ, secondarily through the church and other signs beyond the church and it is within this principle that we accept Mary's mediation. Secondly, *the principle of sacramentality*, because we believe that the invisible spiritual God is present and available to us through the visible and material reality that are made holy by the divine presence. Catholics engage in veneration of Mary because Mary is a symbol, an image of God. God is within her and fills her whole being ultimately becoming for us a *sacrament of God* to be venerated. Thirdly, *the principle of communion of the saints*, in that our relationship with God is multilateral and includes those who have gone before us in purgatory and heaven alike hence Mary is a *preeminent member of the church*, and *preeminent member of the saints*.

By: Father Chi Igboanusi

Hail, holy Mother! The child to whom you
gave birth if the King of heaven and earth
forever.

Luke 1:33



Solemnity of Mary

Not a Holy Day of Obligation for 2011

Saturday, January 1st, 2011

**9:00 Mass—Celebrating the Solemnity of
Mary**



Mark Your Calendar

Christmas Take Down and Storage
Monday, January 10th, 2011: 7:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday—Beginning of Lent 2011
March 9th, 2011



Liturgical Schedule Requests

It is time again to send your vacation request for the upcoming liturgical scheduling cycle. The next schedule will be prepared in January for the weekends occurring from February 2011 through May 2011.

This is a very busy liturgical time of year with First Holy Communion, Lent, Easter, Confirmation and Graduations. Please be proactive in sending us your requests so that we can meet your personal family obligations as well.

Please email those requests to Karen Hardy at k.hardy@stephen.org or contact me at 861-4537.

Also, if you are no longer interested in performing your liturgical ministry obligation, this is an excellent opportunity to be removed from the schedule.

If your personal schedule has changed and you would like to request a different mass time, this again is an excellent time to let Karen know of those changes.

Watch for your schedule in the mail close to the end of January, 2011. Please contact k.hardy@stephen.org or 861-4537 for further information

THANK YOU!!!

Thank you to all the individuals who turned out last Tuesday evening and Wednesday afternoon to make our space so beautiful for the Birth of Our Lord!!!

A special thanks to Joanie Fuchtman and Joyce Bernard for their talented vision in displaying our Christmas decorations.

Christmas decorations will be removed on January 10th at 7:00 p.m., please plan on coming to assist. It takes many individuals to haul those beautiful trees and decorations to our storage in the basement. Any men would be greatly appreciated as lifting the trees onto the shelves in the basement can be quite strenuous!

Thank you to our maintenance staff who assisted in preparing our sidewalks and moving all of the tables and storage shelves in the dining room so we could prepare that space for the liturgy.

Thank you to the 8th graders who assisted with the Chair Set Up and Take Down for our extra worship spaces. You and your parents really made the project go well.

Thank you to all the Ushers who assisted with the Christmas Eve Liturgies. We had almost 3000 individuals in the building attending our three 4:30 p.m. masses.

Thanks to all liturgical ministers (lectors, EMHC's, servers and ushers) that stepped forward to assist with our liturgies. We needed 34 EMHC's alone at our 4:30 liturgies.

A special thank you to all Sacristans who assist behind the scenes and make our liturgies appear seamless.

Ask the Liturgical Team?

Q: What is a Credence Table?

A. The Credence Table is a table separate from the Altar where the chalice, and paten are placed from the beginning of the Mass until the Offertory time.

During the Offertory, the altar servers remove the sacred vessels from the Credence table and place them on the altar. The wine and water cruets are returned to the Credence table after the priest has washed his hands. .



St. Stephen the Martyr
Liturgy Office

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UNDER THE
LITURGY SECTION**