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# Introduction: Advancing Mariology at Marquette University

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## INTRODUCTION

### ADVANCING MARIOLOGY AT MARQUETTE

A generous gift from an anonymous donor prompted Marquette University's Department of Theology to inaugurate the Theotokos Lecture Series in 2008. Translated as "God-Bearer" or "Mother of God," *Theotokos* is the name bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Church has regarded Mary's motherhood of the divine-human Jesus as the greatest of her attributes and recalls this fact by celebrating the "Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God" each year on January 1.

From the inception of this lecture series, the Department hoped that each lecture would demonstrate the faculty's service to the Church and witness to the world under the patronage of Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of Peace. A variety of theological topics was anticipated as the responsibility for selecting lecturers proceeded under the leadership of a committee of faculty appointed annually by the Department's chairperson. Though the donor did not require that all lectures focus on Mary per se, many fruitful topics pertaining to her continued to emerge over subsequent years and were chosen from many possibilities for exploring in the Theotokos Lecture Series. Together these lectures constitute an advancement in Mariology and a testament to the ongoing interest among scholars that we are delighted to share on this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the series.

#### THE TEN THEOTOKOS LECTURES

In the inaugural 2008 lecture, Brian E. Daley, S.J., focused on the basic continuity of Catholic and Orthodox liturgical and theological traditions regarding Mary's role in the Christian story of salvation despite their differences in terminology and images. The Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at the University of Notre Dame chose "Woman of Many Names:

Mary in Orthodox & Catholic Theology” as the title of his lecture within which he emphasized the unique privileges given to Mary by God that are central to the Church’s teachings. Drawing upon the works of Sergei Bulgakov and Karl Rahner, Fr. Daley reflected on the fundamental meaning of Mary for both Eastern and Western forms of Christian faith.

Maxwell E. Johnson, Professor of Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame, delivered the 2009 Theotokos Lecture titled “The Virgin of Guadalupe in Ecumenical Context: One Lutheran’s Perspective.” According to Johnson, the story and image of Mary at Guadalupe are finding meaning among Protestant Christians. He identified and discussed three ways in which their communities might appropriate the Guadalupe apparition and why: She proclaims the good news of God’s salvation in Christ; she embodies God’s unmerited grace, and in a special way, becomes a “parable” of justification by grace; and, she is a model of what the Church should be in the world. Johnson culminated his lecture with implications for Marian devotion within Protestant communities.

“Mary at the Cross, East & West: Maternal Compassion & Affective Piety in the Earliest Life of the Virgin & High Middle Ages” was the title of Stephen Shoemaker’s lecture in 2010. His detailed study of an early biography of Mary written in Old Georgian and attributed to Maximus the Confessor by some scholars led the Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Oregon to conclude that meditation on her sufferings and lamentations at the Cross had already attained a highly “mature” form in the Christian East by the seventh century and served as the template for numerous Marian compositions during the Middle Ages. Though the importance of the Old Georgian life of Mary for new styles of Marian devotion in the Christian East is “unmistakenly clear,” Shoemaker asserted, its potential influence in the Christian West is much less certain and difficult to ascertain.

The doctrine of Mary’s Immaculate Conception and its reception was explored by Edward T. Oakes, S.J., the late Pro-

fessor of Dogmatic Theology at Mundelein Seminar and the University of the Lake. In his 2011 lecture, "Predestination, Sola Gratia, & Mary's Immaculate Conception: An Ecumenical Reading of a (Still) Church-Dividing Doctrine," he explained that the doctrine has long been regarded as a stumbling block to the eventual reunion of the Christian churches and in conflict with Romans 3:23 "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Fr. Oakes argued that the doctrine actually dovetails with important Reformation concerns, especially unmerited grace and predestination, and he systematically explored these two concerns through the prism of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Kevin J. Hart, Professor of Christian Studies at the University of Virginia, stimulated the thinking of attendees at the 2012 lecture, "Contemplation and Concretion: Four Marian Lyrics." Specifying contemplation of Mary in three ways—as a biblical model, as the vehicle for receiving grace when devoted to her, and as the Virgin Mother, Hart insisted that Scripture and Marian doctrine seldom present Mary concretely for her meaningfulness to people. "Concretion" is the task of "art" that occurs when we ask "How?", and he demonstrated how meaningful Mary can be when examining four Marian lyrics written in English. From Hart's perspective, Marian lyrics enable more meaningful contemplation of Mary, and authentic devotion to her brings the faithful closer to her Son and to his Father.

In "Mary as 'Omnipotent by Grace': An Exposition," Francesca Aran Murphy, Professor of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, reflected on the title "Omnipotent by Grace" that was given to Mary and for which Pope John Paul II urged appropriate understanding. Murphy found this appellation "extravagant" during her lecture in 2013, and she reminded us about the significance of Marian encomiums such as Mediatrix of All Graces and Co-Redeemer that facilitate our understanding when omnipotence is attributed to Mary. Murphy explored the causal role that Mary plays in the divine

plan of rescuing all humanity for eternity with God and how omnipotence entered Catholic thought about her. Settling reasonably on ascribing "graced omnipotence" to Mary, Murphy explained how this qualified appellation provides a human face to the otherwise impersonal notion of omnipotence.

The 2014 Theotokos Lecture was delivered by Rachel Fulton Brown, Associate Professor of History at the University of Chicago. In "Mary in the Scriptures: The Unexpurgated Tradition," Brown argued against current thinking that Mary is rarely encountered in the Bible. She drew creatively on what she described as a long exegetical tradition that began in early Christianity and continued into the early modern era in which Mary was depicted as the tabernacle, ark, temple, and city through which the glory of God is manifested. Far from being simply the mother of the man Jesus, Brown insisted, Mary is Wisdom and the Lady of the Temple who enabled the Israelites to experience God.

In "'The Mighty from Their Thrones': Interpreting Mary of Nazareth," Elizabeth A. Johnson, Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University, asked how Christians in the multi-cultural world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century can appreciate Mary's significance in a way that will spark loving faith in God and its liberating practice. Her answer during the 2015 Theotokos Lecture was to interpret Miriam of Nazareth as a real historical woman who walked faithfully with God during her life's journey and who, joined to the church by the Spirit in the community of saints, encourages faithful discipleship of people in their own times and places. Rooted in scripture and following an historical-sociological research methodology, Johnson presented a theology of Mary as "truly our sister" who fully shares the challenging experiences of others.

Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer delivered the 2016 lecture titled "Mary of Nazareth: Disciple, Mother and Symbol (A Latin American Perspective)." After briefly recalling the history of devotion to Mary in Latin America during the conquest period, the Professor of Systematic Theology at Pon-

tifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro reflected on the mystery of Mary from the concept of the kingdom of God and explored how this vision is lived today in popular religiosity and in Christian Base Communities. Her lecture culminated with a stimulating reflection on Mary at the center of the mystery of the Incarnation and the identification of challenges to Mariological thought that remain.

Our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary lecture was given by Dorian Llywelyn, S.J. who focused on the confluence and complementarity of Marian popular religiosity and justice-centered theology. In "Mirror of Justice, Mother of Mercy: Devotion and Theology in a Renewed Mariology," the Director of the Center for Ignatian Education at Santa Clara University overviewed pre-Vatican Council II approaches to Marian theology and devotional spirituality followed by the postconciliar decline in interest in Marian piety and in Mariology as a field of theological study. He expressed enthusiasm about the renewed interest in feminist, liberationist, and ethnic theologies of Mary as an emblem of justice over the past thirty years and the concurrent flourishing of a grassroots piety of the Virgin Mary as a maternal embodiment of mercy who is active and present in the lives of people who are devoted to her. From Fr. Llywelyn's perspective, Marian spiritual devotions should be considered sympathetically as non-verbal stimuli for theological reflection that can contribute significantly to Mariology.

#### FACILITATORS OF THE LECTURES

Over the past ten years, colleagues in the Department of Theology have contributed to the success of the Theotokos Lecture Series by helping select lecturers, preparing publicity, executing plans for the lectures, and hosting the lecturers. The late Ralph Del Colle served as its first chairperson in 2008 followed by John Laurance, S.J. who chaired the committee for two years and managed many tasks for several years thereafter. Mark Johnson handled publicity efficiently and cheerfully in increasingly creative ways for most of the years I have

chaired the committee. Joseph Ogbonnaya, Dan Maguire, Ulrich Lehner, Bryan Massingale, and the late Lucas Chan, S.J. also shared responsibilities for this annual endeavor. I am thankful to them for their services, to other colleagues who recommended potential lecturers, and to Phil Rossi, S.J., Susan Wood, S.C.L., and Bob Masson who, as chairpersons of the Department of Theology, graciously welcomed faculty, students, staff, and the public to the lectures.

Indispensable over these ten years were the outstanding publishing services rendered by Andy Tallon, Professor of Philosophy and Director of Marquette University Press, who worked tirelessly to generate lecture pamphlets each year and who generously agreed to publish the collection on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the series—his last major publication before retiring. I am also grateful to Maureen Kondrick, Manager of MU Press, who thoughtfully and efficiently handled many details on innumerable occasions that resulted in the timely publication of *Advancing Mariology: The Theotokos Lectures 2008-2017*.

Jame Schaefer, Chairperson  
Theotokos Lecture Committee 2011-2017