

Marian Studies

Volume 39 *Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth National
Convention of The Mariological Society of America
held in East Aurora, N.Y.*

Article 11

1988

Mary--Dawn of the Redemption: Excerpts from a transcription of the presentation

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Recommended Citation

Vaughan, Austin (1988) "Mary--Dawn of the Redemption: Excerpts from a transcription of the presentation," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 39, Article 11.

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MARY—DAWN OF THE REDEMPTION

Excerpts from a transcription of the presentation

This is the first paper of the convention in the Marian Year, so I would like to say a word of tribute to the Holy Father for this Marian Year given to us from his own devotion and his own belief. I will make just one small reference to him; I hope it doesn't interfere with Father O'Connor's paper. I think you are aware that the Holy Father's mother died when he was ten. When he returned to Poland for the first time, he said that from the time he was fourteen he would go with his father every year on the feast of the Assumption to the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. He also said that he attributed his election to Our Lady of Czestochowa.

And I think he could make a pretty good case for that. If you recall, when Paul VI died on the 6th of August in 1978 and the cardinals gathered to elect a new pope, the newspapers said there was an outside chance that they might choose a non-Italian for the first time in 500 years, but, the newspapers continued, if they did it would be a sign not only of rejecting the Italian cardinals but probably also of rejecting the previous papal policies and opting for something new. What they did after three days, as you recall, was elect an Italian, Cardinal Albino Luciani, Patriarch of Venice. He was elected on the 26th of August, the feast of Our Lady of Czestochowa, and as Providence would have it he lived for only thirty-two days. And when he died, for the first time that I am aware of it in history, the same cardinals came back to elect a second pope. The only difference was that the second election chose a Pole. I think he [John Paul II] believes that practically speaking the second election

Mary—Dawn of the Redemption

would have been impossible without the first. And the first, coming on the feast of Czestochowa, paved the way for this.

You may be aware—it's not a secret, but it didn't get gigantic publicity—about the places that John Paul II visited after he became pope. The first Sunday after he was elected, October 22, he was enthroned in an impressive ceremony in St. Peter's Square, brought by TV to all the world. On the second Sunday, he went to a place that most of us have never heard of; I spent six years there. He went to a little town called Mentorella, about forty miles north of Rome, where on top of the small mountain of Guadagnolo there is a Marian shrine that for 200 years has been run by Polish priests. When he was a student priest in Rome between '46 and '48, he and other Polish priests and seminarians often visited the shrine. They would go out on the trolley car to the foot of the mountain and walk up the last twelve kilometers, the last eight miles, to the shrine. The Sunday before he was elected he repeated that trip. He went by bus this time to the foot of the mountain; he walked up the last twelve kilometers to pray before the image of Our Lady for her guidance on the elections. Then he himself was elected. On the first Sunday that he had free he returned to ask for her help and guidance for the whole of his pontificate. One difference when he went back this time, they wouldn't let him walk the last twelve kilometers; he traveled in an Italian army helicopter.

The third Sunday, he went to the shrines of the patron saints of Italy. He visited the tomb of St. Francis, then came back to Rome to Santa Maria Sopra Minerva where the Dominican St. Catherine of Sienna, the other patron saint, is venerated, and he prayed for their intercession and protection of his ministry to the people of Italy.

Many of you have probably seen what may be the most famous photo of this pope, kneeling at a picture with his eyes raised to what was in front of him. That photo was taken that afternoon in front of the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. In a sense, it seems to provide the setting for his pontificate as well. So I'd like to dedicate this paper to

him in this Marian year, which certainly is something that he has brought to us in a special way.

The title of the paper is:

MARY THE DAWN OF THE REDEMPTION

Our convention is dedicated in a special way to the encyclical *Mother of the Redeemer*. I recall that in a small seminar at the Catholic Theological Society of America some years back, Eamon Carroll, in giving a review of Edward Schillebeeckx's book, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, remarked that the title was a mistranslation and should have been *Mary, Mother of the Redeemer*. The encyclical *Mary, Mother of the Redeemer* has that very title and gives me the topic of my talk.

We will start near the beginning at number three which tells us that the Church has constantly been aware that Mary appeared on the horizon of salvation history before Christ. That she preceded the coming of Christ is reflected every year in the liturgy of Advent. As a passing remark, I think the title Mother of the Redeemer has possibilities as a kind of fundamental principle of Mariology, to which everything else in Mariology relates.

It's interesting that this year is the 100th anniversary of the death of Mathias Scheeben (+1888-1988). We are all acquainted with his great Mariology arranged around his notion of the Bridal Motherhood as fundamental principle. Mary is the Mother of Jesus and also the Bride of Jesus. That interpretation of Scheeben's was rejected by most later Mariologists in favor of making the Mother of God the primary principle, the fundamental principle. The greatest single development in Mariology in the twentieth century, I believe, is Paul VI's description of Mary as Mother of the Church. In a very real sense it has both replaced and reshaped the doctrine of redemption, and I think that it's a doctrine still virtually unexplored in terms of its ramifications. I also believe that Mother of the Redeemer is the link between Mother of God, mother of the physical Jesus, and

Mary—Dawn of the Redemption

Mother of the Church, mother of the mystical Jesus. I think we could make a very strong case for such a fundamental principle of Mariology to which everything else would relate.

The second intercession at Lauds yesterday for the feast of the Visitation went like this: "Son of Justice, the Immaculate Virgin was the white dawn announcing your rising. Grant that we may always live in the light of your coming." The hymn for Lauds yesterday, not an obligatory one but a hymn you are most familiar with, has words unbelievably beautiful to me:

Mary the dawn, Christ the Perfect Day;
Mary the gate, Christ the Heavenly Way!
Mary the root, Christ the Mystic Vine;
Mary the grape, Christ the Sacred Wine!
Mary the wheat, Christ the Living Bread;
Mary the stem, Christ the Rose blood-red!
Mary the font, Christ the Cleansing Flood;
Mary the cup, Christ the Saving Blood!
Mary the temple, Christ the temple's Lord;
Mary the shrine, Christ the God adored!
Mary the beacon, Christ the Haven's Rest;
Mary the mirror, Christ the Vision Blest!
Mary the mother, Christ the mother's Son
By all things blest while endless ages run. Amen.

What do we mean in talking about Mary as the dawn? The dawn is the light that we see before the sun has risen. Mary's immaculate conception was the first appearance of sanctifying grace in the world since it was lost by our first parents. I think this is part of the real meaning of the phrase that we grew up with, that the gates of heaven were closed until after Jesus rose from the dead. What is meant is the disappearance of sanctifying grace. Jesus descended into hell, into limbo, to become the efficient cause as well as the final cause of the salvation of all the people of the Old Testament.

The dawn is the light that comes from the rising sun. Mary's grace was an anticipation of the merits of Jesus. Her

redemption was as real as ours but different from ours—different in kind because there was a difference in role that God had intended for her. The dawn is a reflection of the sun. No human being who has ever lived has ever spiritually reflected Jesus more perfectly. I think in passing you could raise the question: Did Jesus reflect her very closely physically? I suspect that there was a close physical resemblance between them because all of his genes came from her. He had no human father. About two years ago I asked a world-renowned geneticist, Jérôme Lejeune, what he thought of the opinion. He said he believed it, but then he carried it a step further than I had ever heard any Mariologist do. He said he thought that there would have been a modification in the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary to carry the Son of God for nine months. He didn't specify what he meant; he said that what happened in her body was so different that he didn't believe that it was simply to be described on a merely natural level.

The dawn has a beauty all its own. It's not the same as the rising sun; it's not an exact replica. The dawn brings us those colors of red, bright red and orange, and it's a reminder to us that Mary has a beauty that is different from Jesus'. She was in some things what he wasn't; what he couldn't be. Mary was a woman; she was a mother; she was a wife. She was quiet in terms of making no public statements. She was maternal; she was feminine. She was closely, intimately, related to Jesus and yet not just the same. The dawn isn't the same as the rising sun. The dawn is what links the sun to a darkened world, without overshadowing the sun or replacing it.

We believe—the Church has always believed—that Mary is the safest and the surest way to Jesus. She is always pointing toward him. It is interesting to me that the two most frequent ways in Christian art of portraying Jesus are in the crib and on the cross. You see those representations much more than you ever will see representations of a miracle or of Jesus preaching, or of the Resurrection, or of the Last Supper. I think there's a reason for that. There is nothing

that is more convincing to us of how much God has loved us than the condescension that is expressed in his being a helpless infant and his being defenseless when executed as a criminal at the end. But both of these are scenes in which the Blessed Virgin is profoundly and intimately involved. He wouldn't be there as an infant except for her. He wouldn't have survived as an infant if she had not cared for him. In God's providence, she was with him also at the foot of the cross. Even in the times when Christian art has portrayed her by herself—images that we have of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes, or Fatima—even in those instances, the only reason that we attend to her is because of her relationship with Jesus. The reason for our devotion is not because of a peculiar beauty all her own, but because of the fact that she is his mother, and we cannot conceivably move toward her without implicitly moving toward him.

In the dawn is a promise that the sun is on its way and cannot be far behind. Mary is the best expression of closeness to Jesus, and our best assurance of how to find him.

Now on the other side (just mentioning these in passing), there are aspects of Mary that are not portrayed at all in this description of her as the dawn of redemption. In speaking of her as the dawn of redemption, you don't say anything specifically about her being mother, about her being woman, about her being a saint, a holy person with faith and hope and charity. Those things are not included in that kind of an image. There are other aspects of Mary that are not accurately portrayed in that image. The dawn disappears with the rising of the sun, and yet Mary remains when Jesus has fully completed his work of redemption. She remains, not as a rival but, to use the figure that the Church both in her liturgy and in her poetry has always used, as the moon, reflecting his beauty and his light in her own.

I'd like to add a few thoughts about Vatican II's presentation of Mary's role in the redemption. All this is very familiar to you, but it's worth recalling in relationship to our topic. There were three major debates over the Blessed Virgin Mary in the second Vatican Council: the debate over wheth-

er or not there should be a separate document on Mary, a debate over the titles of co-redemptrix and mediatrix of all graces, and a debate over the title Mother of the Church.

I think you know that as the council opened on October 7, 1962, there were 73 documents that had been prepared by a preparatory commission, one of which was on the Blessed Virgin Mary. Objections were raised in the first session that such a document would scandalize Protestants, since no separate document had been prepared on Jesus or on the Incarnation. In reverse, there was also a complaint as the council went on that the ecumenism of Vatican II was oriented more toward the West than toward Constantinople or Moscow, especially on this point of devotion to the Blessed Mother. There was a debate in the second session of the council between Cardinals Koenig and Santos, one representative from each side, on whether or not there should be a separate document on the Blessed Virgin. As you know, that debate led to the closest vote of the council—a tally of more than 2200 votes, with a difference of 41. A switch of 21 votes would have made the vote the other way. It stood in favor of no separate document, but rather of incorporating the teaching on Mary into the document on the Church, *Lumen gentium*. I thought at the time that that was a mistake. It certainly has turned into a great blessing. The teaching on Mary is firmly set in the most important document of Vatican II, so it cannot be ignored or put on a shelf as other things happen. The decree on communications is almost never looked at. The document on Christian education has suffered the same fate. Nobody can do that with Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium*. A side effect of putting the Marian doctrine into the final Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium* was the composition of a transitional chapter, Chapter 7, on the Communion of the Saints, a subject whose full riches are yet to be mined. The re-emphasis on eschatology in this post-conciliar period, the insistence that salvation be understood as eternal life with Christ and not simply as a transformation of things here in this day, the reaffirmation of the Church's teachings on death and judgment and the

ties between those in this life and those in the next are all firmly in place in *Lumen gentium*, and I don't believe Chapter 7 would have come to carry such weight had there not been a Chapter 8.

The second issue that was debated in Vatican II was the use of the titles of Co-redemptrix and Mediatrix of All Graces. The first half of this century led to great stress to Mary's unique contribution to our redemption and to the plan of salvation. It brought out the unique way in which she was redeemed. She was redeemed by anticipation, very differently from the rest of us. It laid stress on the importance of her fiat: "Behold the servant girl of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." It led to more emphasis and stress on her conscious involvement at Calvary. There were a number of people who loved Jesus at the foot of the cross, but she was the only one who understood what was going on, who understood that this was a sacrifice for our redemption. For the others there it was just disaster, a horror that had happened, a meaningless horror as far as they could see. It led to more stress, though not as much as in the other mysteries mentioned, on her involvement at the Presentation, at Cana, at Pentecost. It led to more stress on her unique closeness to Jesus and sensitivity to him, her responsiveness to him. There has never been anybody who was more in tune with Jesus than Mary was and is. That was the background, for the stress on Mary's unique contribution to our redemption.

As to the other title, mediatrix of all graces, prior to the council two hierarchies, those in Belgium and in Mexico, had asked for a definition of Mary Mediatrix of All Graces at Vatican II. It was a crystallization of Mary's unique role in the Communion of Saints as our intercessor, a role which had been expressed so often in the unique popularity of the "Hail Mary" and the Marian shrines like Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima. But as soon as the council was opened, objections were raised to the title mediatrix as unscriptural—Jesus is the one mediator according to St. Paul. Objections were also made to the title co-redemptrix as confusing the role of

Mary with that of Jesus in redemption, at least in appearance if not in fact. So as a result, all of the Church's teachings on Mary's special contribution to redemption wound up being included in Chapter 8, but the title co-redemptrix was never used. And Mediatrix of All Graces was simply described as a title under which the Blessed Virgin Mary was invoked. I think that all this paved the way for the use of another title that could lead to no confusion, but that came only after some heated discussion, the third of the debates focusing on the Mother of the Church.

The title Mother of the Church appeared in the heading of Chapter 8 as it had been prepared for session two. It had been dropped, before the third session by the coordinator of the commission. Its desirability was debated during the third session with the Polish bishops in particular being very prominent and supportive. As you know, it was left out of Chapter 8 of *Lumen gentium*, but at the end of the third session when *Lumen gentium* was signed and proclaimed, Paul VI, in a ceremony at St. Mary Major, to the acclaim of the bishops, declared Mary the Mother of the Church. It meant that we now had to point out Mary's unique role in the plan of salvation that avoided all confusion with the role of Jesus. The Mother of the Redeemer is not the redeemer; the dawn is not the rising sun. But in God's plan there was no redeemer without a mother; there was no sunrise without the dawn. But it meant much more than that, I believe. The title Mother of the Church provides us with faith insights into the events that were involved in our salvation in the past and in the Church at the present time as well. I believe we are still in the early stages of realizing those implications, and they develop partly from the work of theologians such as those who are here. They develop also partly because of the life experiences of the Church that bring home to us things that might otherwise completely escape us. I won't attempt to touch all those implications, but only the ones that portray Mary as the dawn; and Mary as the dawn is a more limited term than Mary as Mother of the Church.

She gave us the light of Jesus beforehand when he walked the face of the earth, and she brings his light to us now as we seek to follow the way, the truth, and the light into eternity. But before taking this double insight up specifically, let me make two preliminary remarks.

One concerns the theology of my time. I say my time, for in my younger days, I believe, it tended to stress arguments from necessity and to brush aside arguments of fittingness or convenience as window dressing. We tacked them on at the end—they were pretty things; that's as far as they went. The things that really counted and of which we were sure were the things that had to be. On the contrary, the "Pars Tertia" of the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas, which deals with the incarnation, is filled with arguments of convenience. Why was it suitable for the Son of God to be born where he was and when he was and how he was? This is an important question because God chose to do things this way when, as far as we know, he could have done otherwise. These are special signs of his wisdom and his love, and we celebrate the special feast of Christmas to help us understand these aspects of his plan of salvation. We often say that Mary didn't have to be a part of God's plan, apart from offering Jesus her flesh and thus making him a part of Adam's race and a part of the chosen people. But this makes it all the more important that God chose to have her with Jesus from the beginning of his life on earth to the end—nobody else, only her. He chose to make the incarnation await her *fiat*. Not that he could not have done it a different way, but he didn't. He chose to involve her profoundly in the key acts of redemption, all the way through, and he chose to preserve the story of that involvement so that it wouldn't be just something that happened, but something that we would know about down to our own time. I believe we are wrongly apologetic for the stress Catholic devotion has laid on Mary's role. It's based on what God has done and we really don't have the right to reshape his actions, to shut our eyes and our ears and make believe that this never happened.

There is a second preliminary remark that I want to make. As theologians, we are sometimes uneasy in speaking of Mary's influence on Jesus. It seems to be putting the cart before the horse. He didn't become our redeemer because she told him to, but because his Father sent him into the world to redeem us. He didn't have to wait for her word before he could move into action. He didn't need her permission. The merits of the things that he did are infinite, and so from that point of view he didn't need her contribution. He brought us the message that comes from God, not something he learned from Mary and Joseph. All of that is true and important in order to defend the divine origin of what Jesus said and did. He's not just a product of his environment, that environment which includes his mother and his foster father. He's much more than that. But we must not in a wrong way try to avoid the scandal of the incarnation that God has really become one of us and remains one of us. Mary nursed him and fed him or he would not have survived. He may have survived by a miracle, but that really isn't the way God intended to work. She directed his steps and kept him from harm. I don't know if Jesus ever caught any colds, but it seems to me that the body that could be racked with pain from nails and from a crown of thorns could be hurt by the things that Jesus knew and learned and by the decisions he made.

How much could he be influenced by the person whom God had prepared from the first moment of her existence both to foreshadow him and to accompany him? I don't know the answer to this except to say that I think the question should be made more open than we often have made it in the past. Jesus became a part of a family when he came into the world, and he made us a part of his family by teaching us that his Father was our Father, that his mother was given to us to be our mother, that we had to try to deal with each other as if we were brothers and sisters, even with the people who are the hardest to deal with that way. I think that we ourselves may not yet have dealt adequately with the scandal of the flesh involved in the incarnation as

it existed on earth and as it exists in heaven, in terms of the closeness that Jesus has come into, in terms of genuine human exchange of relationships.

One of the reasons why we pray to some saints rather than others is that we feel in some way they have a special tie to us, they care for us. I believe that the human ties are something that are real. I think that we have to be very careful with regard to that. I am not trying to anthropomorphize God, and I am not trying to turn judgment into some kind of situation drama or morality play, but on the other hand I suspect that we have almost robotized the relationships between Jesus and those who have been very close to him in a way that he doesn't do himself; it's much more personal than that.

I promised to say a few words on the scriptural presentation of Mary as the dawn, the source of new life.

In what I might call a prelude to the scriptures, we meet Mary as dawn in the truth that she was immaculately conceived. As far as we know it was the first appearance of sanctifying grace since Adam and Eve. What Adam and Eve did to find justification that would distinguish them from the evil ones we do not know, but their justification is not the pattern of our salvation. Mary's Immaculate Conception is a reminder to us that God's grace always comes before our response. Mary's *fiat* didn't come out of nowhere; it came out of the grace that God gave her. We believe the same about vocation. Any vocation, special vocation, comes first from the force of God. It has nothing to do with whether you are good or bad. When you're young in the seminary you become disturbed sometimes when somebody who is very good, much better than you, quits. This is what used to bother me. You get over it after a while if you can accept the fact that God has not called people because they are good. He calls them, and because he has called them he expects them to try to be good. The other way around just doesn't work and it isn't true at all. God's grace comes before our response. Mary's response came at the Annunciation. It's a reminder to us that God's grace is dynamic, not

just for decoration. It affects all of our actions. Mary was different from other human beings. She was more in tune with God than any other human person who has ever lived. She was more responsive and ready to respond to God than any other human person who has ever lived. But there is kind of a problem here, and I don't know what the answer to it is: How recognizable was all this? Can you have a dawn that nobody sees? The Immaculate Conception was invisible even for Mary's parents. When Jesus went back to Nazareth as a rabbi and a wonder-worker for the first time, everybody was surprised—a "carpenter's son"? It had to mean that there was nothing spectacular about this family for the previous twenty years or more. The dawn was hidden because in God's plan the rising sun was hidden too, but it was there; it was at work from the very beginning. Grace can live and work in hidden silent places; it did it then and it does it now.

The Annunciation is the second instance of Mary being the dawn before the rising sun. There would have been no Jesus without Mary, at least in the plan that God made. God waited for her consent, and that consent came thoughtfully. She didn't give it without asking the question first about how it was going to work out and what it was going to involve for her as well. She made that consent on behalf of all mankind for us. Did she assent to all the suffering that was coming? The answer to that is simple enough too. Her response was, "Behold the servant girl of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." She didn't know what was coming, but whatever was coming, if God sent it, she was ready with a consent complete and unconditional. She consented to suffering without even thinking of suffering at that time. Her response in a sense foreshadowed the response that Jesus made in the garden when he could envision the terrible things he would go through the next day, and he begged, "Father, would it be possible for this trial to pass from me?" With no hesitation you find the next words, "But not my will but thine be done."

Her reaction to the words of Elizabeth, "Blessed are you among women, blessed is the fruit of thy womb," and her

reaction to the belief and joy of John the Baptist show Mary again as the dawn. Mary was the one who brought Jesus to Elizabeth and to John. That is the kind of role that God has intended her to have in our lives, not that he can't come himself, but it's the whole aim and purpose of her life to bring him to us. It is interesting to me in our own day that the first act of adoration of Jesus (after Mary's own adoration of the child she carried within her womb) came from an unborn baby, which leaves us with questions on what message this may have for our own day: that in God's providence this is precisely what happened, that it is the child who reacted, that he didn't just move but leapt with joy (if we can accept the words that Elizabeth herself spoke)? The response of Mary to that, I think, was the response of a mother with great and immediate personal sympathy for the child leaping in Elizabeth's womb. Why did Jesus not respond? I suspect physically he was too little to jump himself—on that particular point, I'm not sure but it seems, in terms of the time frame, that that's the most likely explanation. And Mary concludes with her Magnificat, still one of the most beautiful prayers that is found each day in our liturgy. In a sense the Magnificat to me is a foreshadowing of the Messiah's prayer. It's a prayer that gives us almost a perfect attitude of prayer. It's a prayer that expresses that it comes from a lowly handmaid, I am certain, but a loving and trusting servant, a prayer directed to a God that we know watches over us and cares for us. You couldn't possibly have Mary as the dawn in a fuller sense.

She was also the one who, after the angel brought the news to Joseph, I am sure, had to explain why the angel told him not to worry about what was going on. This whole set of incidents between Mary and Joseph is to me not a misunderstanding but an indication that you can have troubles in the best of families. The fault was not with Mary, Joseph, or Jesus, and yet God let it happen, perhaps a misunderstanding to start with. Then Joseph was not able to supply anything better than a cave or a stable as housing for his wife when she brought her child into the world, after

that they had to live as refugees for maybe as long as ten years, not because somebody made a mistake but because God had planned it this way for them.

All through this I suspect a very profound sharing between Joseph and Mary. At the nativity how hard it must have been on Joseph to see her suffering discomfort. And part of Mary's role in turn that night was to comfort him, but also to share her child with the shepherds, with the thoughts inevitably inside of her own heart as she looked down at this baby—he's God and he's mine. Those very words might have inclined her to hold on to him, but she didn't. The front door of the stable and of her heart were open on the night in which Jesus came, because she was to be the dawn that connected people to the rising sun. Never would anything get between them, never would she hold that Son just for herself. I don't know if we could ever imagine the gigantic nature of the act of faith that was involved that night. She adored a baby—a tiny, helpless baby—and, possibly making it harder, it was her baby that she adored, the flesh of her flesh that had come from her. It's easier to believe in an angel coming down and appearing before you than in your own flesh becoming flesh of the Son of God. She accepted that completely; she accepted the scandal of the incarnation before any of the rest of us did, and the scandal of the incarnation is the great manifestation of God's condescension to all of us. Then she shared him with the Magi. In a real sense as far as I can see, she was the first human being to know of the universality of the mission of the Messiah. That's the meaning we attribute to this event, but she was the only one, along with Joseph, who saw these people come—not Jews, but foreigners from distant lands—who had come there because of what he was and what he was going to be for them as well.

At the Presentation, Mary was the first one to offer Jesus back to his Father in heaven. She was the dawn foreshadowing the light of Calvary on that day. The only ones who welcomed him there were an old man and an old woman, even though the prophecy of Malachi had said that one of the

greatest days in Jewish history would be when the Messiah entered into the holy temple in Jerusalem. And the reason nobody else was there was because they were waiting for the man on the white horse and they didn't expect a baby in the arms of its mother. So the only people there to welcome him were an old man and an old woman for whom the greatest moments in their lives came at the very end, the time when most people regarded them as useless, as no longer having anything at all to contribute. But in God's plan, that moment became their richest and most important moment. Mary was there to bring Jesus to Simeon and Anna on that occasion, and the only knowledge of Jesus that these people had, as with the shepherds and the Magi, came from a divine sign, and after the divine sign it came from Mary.

Two last reflections on the Presentation: Mary was told that day in Simeon's prophecy that Jesus would suffer and that she would be there to see him suffer. That I think, unmistakably, cast a shadow over the rest of her life. It made her a sorrowful mother.

Is the Presentation just a midrash? Well, a midrash is a story that is used to communicate a message, and it seems to me one of the things that is unmistakably in that message attached to Jesus at the age of forty days is the notion that he would suffer in the future, that it would not be a triumphal messiahship at all. That much at least, it seems to me, was communicated to Mary on that occasion.

Mary is the dawn of the Church at Pentecost, the last of the scenes in which she figures in scripture. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles—the eleven Apostles are listed by name—there was a twelfth person joined to them. It says that they were there with some of the brethren (no names), with some of the women (no names), but with "Mary, the Mother of Jesus." Why is she mentioned by name? On Pentecost Mary was the focal point of unity that held the about-to-be-born Church together until the coming of the Holy Spirit. She was the perfect image or representation of Jesus to them, and she was at the same time the one who was the

mother who held them together until the Holy Spirit would give them the power and strength they needed to shoot off like rockets into the rest of the world and do the things that she couldn't. Thus Mary is the dawn for the Apostles.

Let me add a word on Mary as the dawn and the Mother of the Church and the sacraments even now into the present. I think there is much to be said about her role in all seven sacraments, although time permits attention only to some of them. Baptism makes us like Jesus, a Son of God and a son of Mary. You can't be one without the other in this plan of salvation. Paul VI in *Mysterium Fidei*, in 1965, reminded us that the Eucharist was genuinely, truly, certainly the flesh of Jesus. What he said was that it was the same flesh that was conceived in the womb of Mary and that hung on the cross. Those were his identifying features. I offer this for your own response. It seems to me that in a way, a different way, Mary was the first one who ever changed bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus—not by words but simply by eating, and, by that, nourishing the child who was within her own womb. In a sense perhaps, by giving him flesh and by giving him blood she foreshadowed what he would become later on.

But, let me conclude with the thought of Mary as the way to Jesus, as seen in two or three examples from history. Guadalupe, to which we're paying more attention as time goes on, comes to mind first. I think that you know that in the ten years after the appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe, eight million Indians became Catholics. Nothing like that had ever happened in the whole history of the Church! The closest thing to it would have been when the king of the Franks came in and brought all those people with him, but perhaps they would have lost their heads if they hadn't come along. It wasn't the same kind of a conversion there. No, all of the Indians came spontaneously. It meant the end of human sacrifice. It was something that has perished. When John Paul II visited the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, he said that he had been told that the Mexican people were 98% Catholic and 100% Guadalupe. If you look at the

pictures in taxicabs, saloons, and barber shops, there is pretty clear evidence of that.

Mary is still the way to Jesus, as she has shown at Lourdes and Fatima: in proposing prayer and penance; in leading people—countless people—to confessions and communions, to returning to Jesus and to a greater closeness to him. This is expressed in a unique way, I think, in the act of entrustment and consecration that John Paul II uttered at Fatima and then invited all the bishops in the world to join him in repeating. It may well be expressed, it seems to me, now at Medjugorje. One of the interesting things about that for us, obviously, is that it is behind the Iron Curtain, an area that we have written off because of the government as almost doomed to atheism. Our Lady's appearance there so far has come under the name of Our Lady of Peace, and the overall message is the same as in past apparitions.

I'd like to conclude with words from *Redemptoris Mater* that point in that direction. They are from near the beginning of the encyclical, where the pope is describing the Advent or expectation of Jesus:

... if to that ancient historical expectation of the Savior we compare these years which are bringing us closer to the end of the second Millennium after Christ and to the beginning of the third, it becomes fully comprehensible that in this present period we wish to turn in a special way to her, the one who in the "night" of the Advent expectation began to shine like a true "Morning Star" (*Stella Matutina*). For just as this star, together with the "dawn," precedes the rising of the sun, so Mary from the time of her Immaculate Conception preceded the coming of the Savior, the rising of the "Sun of Justice" in the history of the human race. (No. 3)

And, Mary, the dawn of our redemption, quickly brings to us Christ, the light of the world, now and forever, Amen.

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