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THE ROLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE NEW EVANGELIZATION IN THE WRITINGS OF BLESSED JOHN PAUL II

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“Duc in altum!”—Pope John Paul II echoed Jesus’ words to Peter to “put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (cf. Lk 5:4) in calling the Church to a new evangelization today. In referring to the Blessed Virgin Mary as the “Star of the New Evangelization,” such as in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 58, for example, Pope John Paul II presents Mary as our model and advocate in this great mission entrusted to all the baptized.

Before discussing the important role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the new evangelization, a proper understanding of the meaning and origin of the new evangelization is essential. In what is referred to as “The Great Commission,” Jesus’ disciples receive the mandate to spread the Good News—or in other words, to evangelize. Before his ascension, Jesus commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:19-20). This command was not only for Jesus’ disciples two thousand years ago, but for his disciples of all times. All the baptized share in this task and privilege of evangelization in our world today.

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172 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

In what is largely considered a landmark document on evangelization, Pope Paul VI writes in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* ("On Evangelization in the Modern World") that "the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. . . . Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize."¹ He further stresses the transformative nature of evangelization through conversion as follows:

For the Church, evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: "Now I am making the whole of creation new" (Rev 21:5). But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the Message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.²

This spreading of the gospel must be carried out both by the witness of one's life as well as by giving a direct proclamation of Jesus to others. Stressing the need for our words being backed up by our life, Pope Paul VI states, "Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness . . . All Christians are called to witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers."³ Stressing the need also for a direct proclamation of the gospel message, he goes on to write:

Nevertheless this always remains insufficient, because even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified—what Peter called always having "your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have"—and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching,

¹ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (New York: St. Paul Media, 1975), no. 14.

² *Ibid.*, no. 18.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 21.

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 173

the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed. The history of the Church, from the discourse of Peter on the morning of Pentecost onwards, has been intermingled and identified with the history of this proclamation. At every new phase of human history, the Church, constantly gripped by the desire to evangelize, has but one preoccupation: whom to send to proclaim the mystery of Jesus? In what way is this mystery to be proclaimed? How can one ensure that it will resound and reach all those who should hear it?⁴

Directly proclaiming the basic kerygma of Jesus' life, teachings, passion, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit are essential to evangelization and the lives of Christians.

Beginning in 1979, Pope John Paul II repeatedly called the Church to a "new evangelization," an evangelization which is new in method, ardor and expression even though Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8). While primary evangelization or the mission "*ad gentes*" can be said to refer to bringing the Gospel to areas where it has never before been proclaimed, the new evangelization is a call to re-evangelize countries that formerly were strong in the faith but are now suffering a serious decline. Cardinal Dulles points out that

Like any evangelistic outreach, the "new evangelization" must be centered on the person of Jesus Christ and on the one and eternal gospel. Within this stable framework, the new evangelization has at least four characteristics that set it off from the evangelistic efforts of previous centuries.⁵

He then describes these four characteristics of the new evangelization that he sees in John Paul II's teaching on the new evangelization. Firstly, it is to involve the participation of each and every Christian, and not simply the religious and clergy. All the baptized share in this mission to evangelize. The second characteristic he states is that it is distinct from missions to foreign countries. The Western world can no longer be seen as solidly Christian. Many of those who are baptized have never been effectively evangelized or made a personal commitment

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 22.

⁵ Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization—What Does It Mean?" in *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, ed. Ralph Martin and Peter Williamson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 29.

174 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

to Jesus and to living their faith. The West is also in need of evangelization. Thirdly, the new evangelization must be directed to cultures. Every culture needs to be informed and transformed by the gospel message. Lastly, the new evangelization envisions a comprehensive Christianization. It involves catechesis as well as instruction in moral doctrine and the Church's social teaching, leading one to a personal transformation and participation in the sacramental life of the Church. It is to lead to what John Paul II and Paul VI call "a civilization of love."⁶

So strongly did Pope John Paul II feel about the need for the new evangelization, that he desired to commit all of the Church's energies to it. He writes, "I sense that the moment has come to commit all the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution in the Church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples."⁷ He repeated this appeal to the Church many times throughout the rest of his life. For instance, in his apostolic letter at the close of the Jubilee Year 2000 entitled *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, the pope writes,

Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the new evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).⁸

The call to spread the good news was a message John Paul II never tired of proclaiming. This message was not limited to adults, as the pope would repeatedly challenge young people to take up their role in evangelization as well. At World Youth Day in 1989, Pope John Paul II thus challenged the youth:

To be Christian means to be missionaries, to be apostles. It is not enough to discover Christ—you must bring him to others! . . . You must have the courage to speak about Christ, to bear witness to your faith through a

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-32.

⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Sherbrooke, QC: Pauline Press, 1991), no. 3.

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2001), no. 40.

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 175

lifestyle inspired by the Gospel. The harvest is great indeed for evangelization and so many workers are needed. Christ trusts you and counts on your collaboration.⁹

John Paul II took seriously Paul's words to Timothy, "let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tm 4:12), as he challenged the youth of today with the same message.

Both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II recognized the important influence of the Blessed Virgin Mary in evangelization. Towards the end of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI writes,

This is the desire that we rejoice to entrust to the hands and the heart of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary, on this day which is especially consecrated to her and which is also the tenth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council. On the morning of Pentecost she watched over with her prayer the beginning of evangelization prompted by the Holy Spirit: may she be the Star of the evangelization ever renewed which the Church, docile to the Lord's command, must promote and accomplish, especially in these times which are difficult but full of hope!¹⁰

Paul VI refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary as the "Star of the evangelization" in the above passage. John Paul II would build on this title by referring to her as the "Star of the New Evangelization." Pope John Paul II in his appeals for a new evangelization has repeatedly referred to Mary by this title. In *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, he writes,

On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary to whom, a few months ago, in the presence of a great number of bishops assembled in Rome from all parts of the world, I entrusted the Third Millennium. During this year I have often invoked her as the "Star of the New Evangelization." Now I point to Mary once again as the radiant dawn and sure guide for our steps. Once more, echoing the words of Jesus himself and giving voice to the filial affection of the whole Church, I say to her: "Woman, behold your children" (cf. Jn 19:26) . . . Together we must all imitate the contemplation of Mary, who returned home to Nazareth from

⁹ Cited by William Houck, "Introduction," in *JPII and the New Evangelization*, ed. Martin and Williamson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 21.

¹⁰ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 82.

176 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

her pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, treasuring in her heart the mystery of her Son (cf. Lk 2:51).¹¹

Though not expanding a great deal in that document on what specifically he means by “Star of the New Evangelization,” the pope does refer to Mary as the “radiant dawn” and “sure guide for our steps.”¹² In an address to the media, Pope Francis also used this title for the Blessed Virgin when he encouraged reporters to grow in their knowledge of “the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the reality of the Church. I entrust you to the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelization.”¹³

This image of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a “star” is not a new one in the Church’s tradition. According to medieval tradition, St. Jerome was believed to have understood the name of Mary as linked to the Latin phrase “*stella maris*” (star of the sea), though many now believe he actually wrote “*stillia maris*” (drop of the sea).¹⁴ St. Bernard of Clairvaux reflects on Mary as “Star of the Sea” when he writes,

“And the virgin’s name was Mary” (Lk 1:27). Let us also say a few words about this name, which means “star of the sea” and is most suitably fitting for a virgin mother. For she is most appropriately compared to a star, because, just as a star emits its rays without being corrupted, so the Virgin gave birth to her Son without any injury (to her virginity). When the star emits its rays, this does not make it less bright, and neither does the Son diminish his Mother’s (virginal) integrity. She, therefore, is that noble star risen from Jacob, whose ray gives light to the whole world, whose brightness both shines forth in the heavens and penetrates the depths. It lights up the earth and warms the spirit more than the body; it fosters virtues and dries up vices. Mary, I say, is the distinguished and bright shining star, necessarily lifted up above this great broad sea, gleaming with merits, giving light by her example.¹⁵

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, nos. 58–59.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Pope Francis, “Address to the Media,” March 16, 2013, in *The Catholic Register* (March 24, 2013).

¹⁴ See Richard Kugelman, C.P., S.T.L., S.S.L., “The Holy Name of Mary,” in *Mariology*, ed. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. (3 vols.; Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1955–61), 1:417–418.

¹⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Super missus est*, 2, 17; PL 183, 70–71, in *Mary in the Middle Ages: the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thought of Medieval Latin Theologians*, ed. Luigi Gambero, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 139–140.

This passage gives us insight on Mary's role as "Star of the Sea," and goes on to encourage all to turn to Mary in any dangers, trials and temptations. The passage provides a glimpse of what John Paul II would mean when calling the Blessed Virgin Mary the "Star of the New Evangelization." His writings show that Mary has a tremendous role in the new evangelization as a model, an intercessor and Mother of the Church—as one who obtains for us an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost, leads us to Jesus in the Eucharist, and, as at the first visitation to Elizabeth, continues to bring Jesus to us today.

Part of the great legacy that Pope John Paul II has left the Church can be found in his contribution to the field of Mariology. His personal devotion to the Mother of God is evidenced in so many of his encyclicals and other writings. Some of his major writings which contain extensive teachings on the Blessed Virgin Mary include *Redemptoris Mater*, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and *Ecclesia in America*. Many other writings of his conclude with his entrusting the Church or a particular need to Mary's maternal intercession.

In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II speaks of the Blessed Virgin Mary as having a "precise place in the plan of salvation"¹⁶ and an "active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church."¹⁷ He stresses that in the Incarnation Christ and Mary are "indissolubly joined,"¹⁸ and by her *fiat* Mary "prefigures the Church's condition as spouse and mother."¹⁹ She is a model for the Church in faith, hope, and charity and is referred to as the "morning star" who preceded the coming of the Savior from the time of her Immaculate Conception.²⁰ She continues to go before the People of God, as her "exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a constant point of reference for the Church,"²¹ and she "does not cease to be the 'Star of the Sea' (*Maris Stella*) for all those who are still on the

¹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), no. 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, no. 6.

178 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

journey of faith.”²² She is “already the eschatological fulfillment of the Church.”²³

The pope writes extensively of the unique maternal mediation of Mary. In her “solicitude for human beings, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs . . . there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs, and sufferings.”²⁴ He repeatedly stresses that Mary’s maternal mediation “in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its efficacy.”²⁵ In this way the pope reaffirms the Second Vatican Council’s teaching of Mary’s role of mediation being subordinate to that of her Son.

An excellent summary of Mary’s role in evangelization, found in *Redemptoris Mater*, is the following:

After the events of the Resurrection and Ascension, Mary entered the Upper room together with the Apostles to await Pentecost, and was present there as the Mother of the glorified Lord. She was not only the one who “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith” and loyally persevered in her union with her Son “unto the Cross,” *but she was also the “handmaid of the Lord,” left by her Son as Mother in the midst of the infant Church:* “Behold your Mother.” Thus there began to develop a special bond between this mother and the Church. For the infant Church was the fruit of the Cross and Resurrection of her Son. Mary, who from the beginning had given herself without reserve to the person and work of her Son, could not but pour out upon the Church, from the very beginning, her maternal self-giving.²⁶

Mary’s role with the Church was to continue even after Jesus’ death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit at Pentecost, as the pope would go on explain:

After her Son’s departure, her motherhood remains in the Church as maternal mediation: interceding for all her children, the Mother cooperates in the saving work of her Son, the Redeemer of the world. In fact the

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., no. 21.

²⁵ Ibid., no. 22.

²⁶ Ibid., no. 40.

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 179

Council teaches that the “motherhood of Mary in the order of grace . . . will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.” With the redeeming death of her Son, the maternal mediation of the handmaid of the Lord took on a universal dimension, for the work of redemption embraces the whole of humanity. Thus there is manifested in a singular way the efficacy of the one and universal mediation of Christ “between God and men.” Mary’s cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, *in the universality of the mediation of the Redeemer*, the one Mediator.²⁷

Mary’s role in the new evangelization as universal maternal mediation, as well as her association with the Church from the beginning, is brought out clearly in the above passage. In the same document the pope also notes that Mary’s Magnificat proclaims the Messiah’s and the Church’s preferential love for the poor²⁸ and that Mary fully obtained “that ‘state of royal freedom’ proper to Christ’s disciples: to serve means to reign!”²⁹ He notes Mary’s presence at the Sacred Banquet, and that she “guides the faithful to the Eucharist.”³⁰ John Paul also quotes Paul VI by saying “Knowledge of the true Catholic doctrine regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.”³¹ A proper understanding of the Blessed Virgin Mary saves one from many Christological heresies.

In his encyclical letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Pope John Paul II relates the Blessed Virgin Mary with the dignity and vocation of women. He points out that “a woman is to be found at the center of this salvific event”³² as St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians states that, “in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman” (Gal 4:4). Mary can be considered truly the Mother of God because “motherhood concerns the whole person, not just the body, nor even just human nature.”³³ It is the reality “woman—Mother of God” that John Paul II considers as

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., no. 37.

²⁹ Ibid., no. 41.

³⁰ Ibid., no. 44.

³¹ Ibid., no. 47.

³² Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), no. 3.

³³ Ibid., no. 4.

180 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

determining the “essential horizon of reflection on the dignity and the vocation of women.”³⁴ He writes, “the dignity of every human being and the vocation corresponding to that dignity find their definitive measure in union with God. Mary, the woman of the Bible, is the most complete expression of this dignity and vocation.”³⁵ It is that man (and equally woman) is made in the image and likeness of God that forms the basis of all Christian anthropology. The pope notes a “proto-evangelium” can be found in Genesis when he writes, “It is significant that the foretelling of the Redeemer contained in these words refers to ‘the woman.’ She is assigned the first place in the proto-evangelium as the progenitrix of him who will be the Redeemer of man.”³⁶ It is no coincidence that Eve and Mary are joined under the name of “woman.”³⁷ The pope calls Mary the “full revelation of all that is included in the biblical term woman”³⁸ and also the “new beginning of the dignity and vocation of woman, of each and every woman.”³⁹ Both dimensions of the female vocation, that of virginity and motherhood, were united in an exceptional manner in Mary.⁴⁰ The pope cites Vatican II’s document on the Church:

“For in the mystery of the Church, herself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin came first as an eminent and singular exemplar of both virginity and motherhood . . . The Son whom she brought forth is He whom God placed as the first-born of many brethren (cf. Rom 8:29), namely, among the faithful. In their birth and development she cooperates with a maternal love.”⁴¹

In both virginity and in motherhood we find the perfect model in the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In talking of the prophetic character of woman’s femininity, the pope notes it “finds its highest expression in the Virgin

³⁴ Ibid., no. 5.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., no. 11.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., no. 17.

⁴¹ Ibid., no. 22, citing *Lumen Gentium*, no. 63.

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 181

Mother of God.”⁴² He writes that the Blessed Virgin emphasizes “in the fullest and most direct way, the intimate linking of the order of love—which enters the world of human persons through a Woman—with the Holy Spirit.”⁴³

In *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope John Paul II devotes an entire apostolic letter to the rosary. He joins his voice to countless saints and the magisterium in highly recommending the rosary to the faithful. He describes the prayer as “simple yet profound”⁴⁴ and calls it “a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness.”⁴⁵ He emphasizes its effectiveness in evangelization repeatedly, such as when he refers to its “evangelical character”⁴⁶ and also when he writes,

It [the rosary] blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to “set out into the deep” (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, “the way, and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6), “the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn.”⁴⁷

He further relates the rosary to evangelization when he writes that it “goes to the very heart of the Christian life; it offers a familiar yet fruitful spiritual and educational opportunity for personal contemplation, the formation of the People of God, and the new evangelization.”⁴⁸ He calls the rosary a “path of proclamation and increasing knowledge” and a “significant catechetical opportunity which pastors should use to advantage . . . [the rosary] continues to be a valuable pastoral resource for every good evangelizer.”⁴⁹ Such a proven and valuable pastoral resource should not be neglected in one’s efforts in the new evangelization today.

⁴² *Ibid.*, no. 29.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (Sherbrooke, QC: Pauline Press, 2002), no. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 17.

182 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

The pope emphasizes the rosary as a Christocentric prayer and a compendium of the Gospel.⁵⁰ It is “an echo of the prayer of Mary” in which we sit “at the school of Mary” contemplating the face of Christ.⁵¹ In praying the rosary “the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ pass before the eyes of the soul.”⁵² He adds, “this school of Mary is all the more effective if we consider that she teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own ‘pilgrimage of faith.’”⁵³ This prayer “mystically transports us to Mary’s side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home at Nazareth. This enables her to train us and mold us with the same care, until Christ is ‘fully formed’ in us (cf. Gal 4:19).”⁵⁴ The pope quotes St. Louis de Montfort in how devotion to Mary conforms us most perfectly to Christ, pointing out that Mary lives “only in Christ and for Christ.”⁵⁵

He refers to the rosary as a vehicle bringing us “abundant grace as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer,”⁵⁶ through which Mary “desires to exercise . . . that maternal concern to which the dying Redeemer entrusted, in the person of the beloved disciple, all the sons and daughters of the Church ‘Woman, behold your son!’”⁵⁷ He describes the rosary also as “an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society.”⁵⁸ He recommends it as a prayer for peace and for Christian families,⁵⁹ that families should pray together.⁶⁰

The pope points out the power of Mary’s intercession at the wedding of Cana as “she makes known to Jesus the needs of

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, no. 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, no. 14.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 41.

others”⁶¹ and quotes Blessed Bartolo Longo in calling Mary “all-powerful by grace.”⁶² He adds that “to pray the Rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother.”⁶³

In commenting on his addition of the luminous mysteries to the traditional fifteen decades of the rosary, the pope writes, “this addition of these new mysteries . . . is meant to give it fresh life and to enkindle renewed interest in the Rosary’s place within Christian spirituality as a true doorway to the depths of the Heart of Christ, ocean of joy and light, of suffering and of glory.”⁶⁴ The additional mysteries invite us to reflect on the events of Jesus’ life during his three years of public ministry.

In his reflection on the third glorious mystery of Pentecost, the pope says the rosary sets before us this mystery which “reveals the face of the Church as a family gathered together with Mary, enlivened by the powerful outpouring of the Spirit and ready for the mission of evangelization . . . this can only impel [the faithful] to bear courageous witness to that ‘good news’ which gives meaning to their entire existence.”⁶⁵

John Paul II points out that the rosary does not conflict with the Liturgy but sustains it. It is an introduction and echo of the liturgy, “enabling people to participate fully and interiorly in it and to reap its fruits in their daily lives.”⁶⁶ In his encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and throughout his papacy, Pope John Paul II stressed the connection between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist. As Msgr. Calkins aptly puts it,

John Paul II has truly illuminated the bond between Mary and the Eucharist, bringing the magisterium to the highest level of insight that it has thus far attained on this matter. His teaching on Mary’s presence in the Mass as one who offers the sacrifice in union with Christ, while clearly grounded in Scripture and Tradition, has broken new ground in the magisterium. He has also broken new ground in teaching about Mary’s mediation of the graces of the Mass and of the sacraments. Up to

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, no. 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, no. 25.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 19.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 4.

184 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

now one could only find such assertions in the testimony of the mystics and in the reflection of certain theologians whose work is considered passé by many. He further elucidated Mary's role as guide for the faithful to the Mystery of the Eucharist and in their participation in the Mass.⁶⁷

Early in the document, John Paul II recalls his goal for the new millennium—a goal which involves the new evangelization and the Blessed Virgin Mary. He writes:

To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “program” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization.⁶⁸

The pope devotes an entire chapter of this document on the Eucharist to Mary. In chapter six, entitled “At the School of Mary, ‘Woman of the Eucharist,’” John Paul emphasizes the link between Mary and the Eucharist—a relationship he calls profound.⁶⁹ He begins this chapter saying we cannot neglect Mary, the Church's mother and model, if we hope to see the full connection between the Church and the Eucharist. Mary “can guide us towards this most holy sacrament.”⁷⁰ Though she was not present at the Last Supper, Mary gathered with the apostles in prayer in expectation of Pentecost, and must have been present at eucharistic celebrations of early Christians.⁷¹

In her interior disposition she is a “woman of the Eucharist” throughout her entire life—a model to be imitated and a help for us in acquiring a similar disposition.⁷² She lived a eucharistic faith, as demonstrated by her *fiat*. In offering her virginal womb for the Word to become flesh, she “lived her Eucharistic faith even before the institution of the Eucharist . . . At the

⁶⁷ A. B. Calkins, “Mary's Presence in the Mass according to Pope John Paul II,” in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross, VI: Marian Coredeemption in the Eucharistic Mystery: Acts of the Sixth International Symposium on Marian Coredeemption* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2007), 25.

⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 6.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 53.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, no. 54.

Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's body and blood."⁷³ Our "Amen" in receiving the body of Jesus is analogous to Mary's "*Fiat*" at the Annunciation.⁷⁴

The pope notes that in the Visitation, Mary became "the first 'tabernacle' in history in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary."⁷⁵ Using the presentation in the temple as an example, John Paul states "Mary, throughout her life at Christ's side and not only at Calvary, made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist."⁷⁶

In his Angelus address for Corpus Christi of June 5, 1983, John Paul II speaks in vivid terms of Mary's association with Christ's sacrificial offering:

Born of the Virgin to be a pure, holy and immaculate oblation, Christ offered on the Cross the one perfect Sacrifice which every Mass, in an unbloody manner, renews and makes present. In that one Sacrifice, Mary, the first redeemed, the Mother of the Church, had an active part. She stood near the Crucified, suffering deeply with her Firstborn; with a motherly heart she associated herself with his Sacrifice; with love she consented to his immolation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 58; *Martialis Cultus*, 20): she offered him and she offered herself to the Father.⁷⁷

Again stressing the connection between the Incarnation and the passion, death, and resurrection of the Lord made present in the Eucharist, the pope writes, "The body given up for us and made present under sacramental signs was the same body which [Mary] had conceived in her womb."⁷⁸ These points

⁷³ Ibid., no. 55.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., no. 56.

⁷⁷ John Paul II, Angelus Address, June 5, 1983, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI, 1 (1983), 1447: as cited in A. B. Calkins, "Mary's Presence in the Mass according to Pope John Paul II," in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, VI (see n. 67 above), 11.

⁷⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 56.

186 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

provide a solid foundation for referring to Mary as Mother of the Eucharist. As the Council of Ephesus rightly called Mary "Mother of God" as she was the mother of Jesus, and as it is the same Jesus who is present in the Eucharist, then Mary can also be called the Mother of the Eucharist.

Besides Mary's sharing in the sacrificial offering of her Son on the cross, the pope further describes how she is considered to be present to us in the celebration of the Eucharist:

In the "memorial" of Calvary all that Christ accomplished by his passion and his death is present. Consequently all that Christ did with regard to his Mother for our sake is also present. To her he gave the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: "Behold, your Son!" To each of us he also says, "Behold your mother!" (cf. Jn 19:26-27).

Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving this gift. It means accepting—like John—the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on a commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of his Mother and allowing her to accompany us. Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist.⁷⁹

These few lines say so much! In re-presenting the sacrifice of Calvary in the Mass, the gift of Jesus' mother to us on the cross is also made present, and thus Mary is present at every Eucharistic celebration.

The true "Eucharistic attitude" can be found in Mary's song, the Magnificat, as "the Eucharist, like the Canticle of Mary, is first and foremost praise and thanksgiving."⁸⁰ This same disposition of thanksgiving that Mary shows in her Magnificat and throughout her life should also be our own disposition during the celebration of the Eucharist and every moment of our lives as well. At each celebration of the Eucharist "Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church,"⁸¹ and the Church makes her own the eucharistic spirit of Mary as expressed in her Magnificat.⁸² One should be careful to note

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 57.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 58.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, no. 57.

⁸² *Ibid.*, no. 58.

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 187

that we are talking of a mystical presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Mass which is distinct from the way Jesus becomes present in the consecration.

As part of his conclusion to *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the pope gives us all the following exhortation:

Let us listen to Mary Most Holy, in whom the mystery of the Eucharist appears, more than in anyone else, as a mystery of light. Gazing upon Mary, we come to know the transforming power present in the Eucharist. In her we see the world renewed in love. Contemplating her, assumed body and soul into heaven, we see opening up before us those “new heavens” and that “new earth” which will appear at the second coming of Christ. Here below, the Eucharist represents their pledge, and in a certain way, their anticipation: “*Veni, Domine Iesu!*” (Rev 22:20).⁸³

The pope once again reminds us to look to the Blessed Virgin Mary for a deeper understanding of the Eucharist.

In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II encourages all the Church “together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14), . . . to pray for the Spirit and to gain strength and courage to carry out the missionary mandate.”⁸⁴ He encourages all to cooperate in the work of salvation “together with Mary and following the example of Mary, the Church’s Mother and model.”⁸⁵ He ends by entrusting the Church to Mary’s mediation, which he adds is “wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.”⁸⁶

It has been often said that there is no new evangelization without a new Pentecost. It is the Holy Spirit who is the primary agent and goal in evangelization.⁸⁷ Just as Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation and prayed fervently with the apostles for the coming of the Holy Spirit before the first Pentecost, so she is continually united to the Church in prayer for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit today. Christians should avail themselves of this great help offered by

⁸³ Ibid., no. 62.

⁸⁴ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (Sherbrooke, QC: Pauline Press, 1991), no. 92.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 75.

188 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

Mary, the “spouse of the Holy Spirit” as St. Maximilian Kolbe would say, by uniting their prayers to hers in order to obtain a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a great fruitfulness in efforts in evangelization.

At Mary’s greeting, John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb at the presence of the Lord and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary brings Jesus with her, and obtains for us an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as at Pentecost. St. Louis de Montfort stresses the closeness of this relationship by describing Mary as the mystical spouse of the Holy Spirit who brings souls to Jesus in a preeminent way. St. Louis de Montfort calls devotion to Mary, “a smooth, short, perfect and sure way of attaining union with our Lord, in which Christian perfection consists.”⁸⁸

Bishop Sam Jacobs writes of the importance of the Holy Spirit to the new evangelization by stating:

The call is not just to evangelize, but to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with new boldness. After commissioning the disciples to proclaim the good news to all the nations, Jesus tells them to wait for the coming of the Spirit promised by the Father. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁸⁹

For a Christian’s evangelistic efforts to be fruitful they must be carried out with the help of the Holy Spirit. Who better can one turn to for a greater outpouring of the Spirit than the Blessed Virgin Mary who conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit, who prayed with the apostles before Pentecost for the Holy Spirit, and who is referred to as the “Mystical Spouse of the Holy Spirit”?

⁸⁸ St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, no. 152, in *God Alone: The Collected Writings of St. Louis Mary de Montfort* (Bay Shore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1988), 336.

⁸⁹ Sam Jacobs, “How Must Catholics Evangelize? Evangelization and the Power of the Holy Spirit,” in *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, ed. R. Martin & P. Williamson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 61.

Part of the Church's evangelization efforts necessarily also involve a renewed emphasis on and love of Sacred Scriptures—the Word of God. Who better than Mary can one take as a model of contemplating God's word and living it faithfully and continually? After hearing the angels' words through the shepherds, we are told "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). Similarly, though Mary did not understand Jesus' words when finding him in the temple after he was lost for three days, we are told "his mother kept all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:51). Christians, likewise, should all follow this example and ponder continually God's word in their hearts.

In the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI holds up the Blessed Virgin Mary as an example of interiorizing and living out the Word of God most fully. Benedict writes:

The synod Fathers declared that the basic aim of the Twelfth Assembly was to "renew the Church's faith in the word of God." To do so, we need to look to the one in whom the interplay between the word of God and faith was brought to perfection, that is, to the Virgin Mary, "who by her 'yes' to the word of the covenant and her mission, perfectly fulfills the divine vocation of humanity." The human reality created through the word finds its most perfect image in Mary's obedient faith. From the Annunciation to Pentecost she appears as a woman completely open to the will of God. She is the Immaculate Conception, the one whom God made "full of grace" (cf. Lk 1:28) and unconditionally docile to his word (cf. Lk 1:38). Her obedient faith shapes her life at every moment before God's plan. A Virgin ever attentive to God's word, she lives completely attuned to that word; she treasures in her heart the events of her Son, piecing them together as if in a single mosaic (cf. Lk 2:19,51).⁹⁰

The pope goes further to recommend reflection by all and even scholarly study of how the Blessed Virgin Mary relates to the Word of God. In Mary's Magnificat, her great song of praise and thanksgiving, we see that Mary has already pondered the scriptures in her heart as she uses interwoven strands of

⁹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010), no. 27.

190 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

scripture (such as Hannah's song) to make her own song. As St. Augustine says, Mary conceived the Word in her mind before she conceived in her womb.⁹¹ In other words, through her knowledge and love of scriptures she came to a deep knowledge and love of the Lord—she welcomed the Lord through the scriptures even before she conceived him in her womb.

We also see the Blessed Virgin Mary as a model of faith. The Second Vatican Council refers to Mary's pilgrimage of faith. Cardinal Schönborn of Austria in an address to priests during the Year of the Priests referred to the significance of the line of scripture in the Annunciation that "the angel departed from her" (Lk 1:38b) as a testimony to her living a pilgrimage of faith as we do.⁹² Faith is "the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things unseen" (Heb 11:1), as the letter to the Hebrews tells us. Though Mary encountered the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, we are also told the angel departed from her. The Blessed Virgin Mary lived by faith strengthened by prayer and the Word of God, just as we are invited to do. Elizabeth remarks on Mary's great faith as she declares "Blessed is she who believed the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled!" (Lk 1:45). Mary shows her great faith and trust in the Lord in her response to the angel Gabriel, "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38a), and in her advice to the servants at the wedding of Cana, "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5).

Similarly, we see in the Blessed Virgin Mary a model of how faith and reason go hand in hand. Mary's question to the angel, "How can this be, for I am a virgin?" (Lk 1:34) models for us that "faith seeks understanding." Her example of pondering the word of God in her heart shows us a proper disposition to receiving God's word. In Pope John Paul's encyclical *Faith and Reason*, the pope quotes the monks of Christian antiquity, who referred to Mary as "the table at which faith sits in thought,"⁹³ and their conviction of the need to "*philosophari in Maria*."⁹⁴

⁹¹ St. Augustine, *Sermo* 25, 7-8: PL 46, 937-938.

⁹² Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, spoken in an address to priests at the International Priests' Retreat in Ars, for which I was present, Oct. 3, 2009.

⁹³ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (1998), no. 108.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 191

He ends the document with a prayer to Mary who “giving birth to the Truth and treasuring it in her heart, has shared it forever with all the world.”⁹⁵ In a world which tries to separate faith from reason, the Blessed Virgin Mary gives us a splendid example of how faith and reason go together.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is a model not only in her intimate union with the Holy Spirit in her faith and in her pondering the word of God, but also in her humility, in her obedience to the Lord, in her discipleship, in her virginity, in her motherhood, and in all the virtues. In the Blessed Virgin Mary one also sees a sense of the urgency of the new evangelization. Immediately after receiving the good news from the angel Gabriel, the scriptures recount that “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39) to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The shepherds upon receiving the good news from the angels also “went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger” (Lk 2:16). The Lord is calling the Church to the new evangelization today, and inviting all to respond “with haste” as did Mary and the shepherds.

Besides providing a marvelous example in discipleship and all the Christian virtues, the Blessed Virgin Mary also carries out an active role in evangelization today. She exercises a “maternal mediation” as John Paul II puts it; she intercedes for the Church “until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect” as the Second Vatican Council states. Church members have been repeatedly and strongly urged by the magisterium to turn to Mary in all their needs, trusting in her motherly compassion and intercession for her beloved children. Numerous liturgical feasts throughout the year celebrate her example and advocacy. Private devotions, such as the rosary, novenas, acts of consecration or entrustment to Mary, as well as litanies and scapulars, are also encouraged as aids in one’s prayer life to join one’s prayer to that of the Blessed Virgin Mary and enjoy her powerful intercession before her Son.

Though not essential to one’s faith, numerous private revelations also demonstrate the active role that the Blessed Virgin Mary carries out in evangelization today. According to the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

192 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

Catechism of the Catholic Church, private revelations do not belong to the deposit of the faith. The *Catechism* states that “it is not their [private revelations’] role to improve or complete Christ’s definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history”⁹⁶ and that “no further public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁹⁷ The American Bishops explain the purpose of private revelations by saying, “These providential happenings serve as reminders to us of basic Christian themes: prayer, penance, and the necessity of the sacraments.”⁹⁸ Marian apparitions are properly understood as private revelations.

We also see the Blessed Virgin Mary as model of inculturation of the Gospel. Citing the approved apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Guadalupe, Mexico, John Paul II writes in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America* that “America, which historically has been, and still is, a melting-pot of peoples, has recognized in the *mestiza* face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, ‘in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization.’”⁹⁹ The pope stresses the powerful effect the Blessed Virgin Mary has had in the evangelization of the Americas when he writes,

How can we fail to emphasize the role which belongs to the Virgin Mary in relation to the pilgrim Church in America journeying towards its encounter with the Lord? . . . The appearance of Mary to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in 1531 had a decisive effect on evangelization. Its influence greatly overflows the boundaries of Mexico, spreading to the whole Continent . . . With the passage of time, pastors and faithful alike have grown increasingly conscious of the role of the Virgin Mary in the evangelization of America.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ottawa: Publications Service of Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1994), no. 67.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 66.

⁹⁸ Frederick Jelly, *Madonna: Mary in the Catholic Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 191.

⁹⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in America . . . On the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1999), no. 11: citing his own address at the opening of the 4th General Conference of Latin American Bishops (Oct. 12, 1992).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Pope John Paul II then refers to the Blessed Virgin Mary as the “Star of the first and new evangelization”:

In the prayer composed for the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops, Holy Mary of Guadalupe is invoked as “Patroness of all America and Star of the first and new evangelization.” In view of this, I welcome with joy the proposal of the Synod Fathers that the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and Evangelizer of America, be celebrated throughout the continent on December 12. It is my heartfelt hope that she, whose intercession was responsible for strengthening the faith of the first disciples (cf. Jn 2:11), will by her maternal intercession guide the Church in America, obtaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as she once did for the early Church (cf. Acts 1:14), so that the new evangelization may yield a splendid flowering of Christian life.¹⁰¹

In proclaiming the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the pope repeatedly turns to the Blessed Virgin for continuing assistance in the mission of evangelization. Paraphrasing St. Louis de Montfort, Pope John Paul II adds, “Mary is the sure path to our meeting with Christ. Devotion to the Mother of the Lord, when it is genuine, is always an impetus to a life guided by the spirit and values of the Gospel.”¹⁰²

The Blessed Virgin Mary also comes to the aid of the Church in its struggle against evil. As the letter to the Ephesians states: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:11-12). Christians are involved in a spiritual warfare, and the Blessed Virgin Mary can be of great assistance to the members of the Church in this.

In his book “Behold Your Mother,” Fr. Rosetti writes on the involvement of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the spiritual warfare that creation is involved in. He writes,

In the book of Genesis, after the sin of Adam and Eve, God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman . . . He will strike at

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

194 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

your head, while you strike at his heel" (3:15). From a theological perspective, this passage has been interpreted to be a prediction of the unending strife between Satan and human beings. This truth is echoed in Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*: "for a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day, as the Lord has attested" (GS 37). In his encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II cited this passage from *Gaudium et Spes* and added: "For Mary, present in the Church as the Mother of the Redeemer, takes part, as a mother, in that monumental struggle" (RM 24).¹⁰³

Both Genesis and Revelation tell of the enmity between the devil and "the woman," that is, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the descendent of Eve whose offspring will crush the serpent's head with his heel. In his encyclical *Mulieris Dignitatem*, John Paul II writes of this passage from Genesis that

It is significant that the foretelling of the Redeemer contained in these words refers to "the woman." She is assigned the first place in the Proto-evangelium as the progenetrix of him who will be the Redeemer of man. And since the redemption is to be accomplished through a struggle against evil—through the "enmity" between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of him who, as "the father of lies" (Jn 8:44), is the first author of sin in human history—it is also an enmity between him and the woman.¹⁰⁴

In his encyclical on the rosary, Pope John Paul II also describes the rosary as "an effective spiritual weapon against the evils afflicting society."¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II writes of the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary when he says,

After my election as Pope, as I became more involved in the problems of the universal Church, I came to have a similar conviction: On this universal level, if victory comes it will be brought by Mary. Christ will conquer

¹⁰³ Stephen Rossetti, *Behold Your Mother: Priests Speak about Mary* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2007), 123.

¹⁰⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), no. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 2.

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 195

through her, because he wants the Church's victories now and in the future to be linked to her.¹⁰⁶

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a great source of help and protection in the spiritual battles the Christian faces throughout life. Accompanying the members of the Church in struggles and temptations, she continually invites them to look to Jesus and she obtains for them a strengthening by the Holy Spirit in all their needs.

The call has gone out to "*duc in altum*"—to once again "put out into the deep" through the new evangelization, as the apostles were called to do by the Lord himself. This mission to evangelize, given to the Church at the great commission before the Lord's Ascension, and for which we were empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, is shared by all the baptized members of the Church. As Pope Paul VI stated so powerfully, the Church exists in order to evangelize; evangelization is her primary mission; and evangelization is the grace and vocation proper to her.¹⁰⁷ In calling for a new evangelization, Pope John Paul II invited the Church to rekindle the first fervor of the faith and restore in her members the zeal for proclaiming the Gospel that made St. Paul exclaim, "Woe to me if I fail to preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16).

Of particular importance from the beginning in this mission of evangelization is the decisive role of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Not only through the model of perfect discipleship she gives and her example of saying "yes" completely to the Lord's will throughout her life, but also through her ongoing active role in bringing Jesus to us, Mary is rightly called the "Star of the New Evangelization."¹⁰⁸ In Mary's visitation of her cousin Elizabeth we see an encapsulation of her sublime role today, as she brings Jesus to others, obtains an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and always points to Jesus, offering her eucharistic hymn of thanksgiving and praise in the Magnificat.

¹⁰⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York Random House, 1994), 220.

¹⁰⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, no. 58.

196 *Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II*

The scriptures show Mary as a model of contemplation and of docility to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit being the “primary agent in evangelization”¹⁰⁹ as well as the “goal of evangelization.”¹¹⁰

Blessed Pope John Paul II unceasingly commended the Church to the maternal care and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He brought magisterial teachings to a new level with his emphasis on the connection between Mary and the Eucharist, showing how she joined in offering the sacrifice of her Son on Calvary. He also taught that Mary is present at every celebration of the Eucharist which makes present to us all the graces of Calvary, including Jesus giving us Mary as our mother.

For success in evangelization one should not fail to follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her pondering the Word of God in her heart and her docility to the Holy Spirit. The Christian should heed her advice at Cana to “Do whatever He tells you” and follow her example of discipleship in staying at the foot of the cross. The Christian faithful should join with her in prayer, especially in the most holy rosary, in invoking the Holy Spirit to come anew upon us and breathe new life into the Church. One should also not neglect to seek her help in the spiritual battles the Christian must face continually, remembering that she is the woman whose offspring has crushed the serpent’s head.

If the Church exists to evangelize, and Mary is a part of the Church, then it is evident she is actively carrying out this role with amazing results, as demonstrated by her role in the evangelization of the Americas. Following her appearing at Guadalupe, Mexico, vast numbers of people came to the faith. Similar results can be seen following her appearing at Lourdes and Fatima as she humbly points people back to her Son and calls them to deeper prayer and conversion.

In setting out on the mission of the new evangelization today, may all Christians do so with the same sense of urgency seen in the Blessed Virgin Mary, who arose and went with haste to bring Jesus within her to her cousin Elizabeth. May all

¹⁰⁹ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntandi*, no. 75.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Mary in the New Evangelization in John Paul II 197

Christians respond with a “*fiat*,” a “yes,” to the Lord that echoes that of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Annunciation and at the foot of the cross. May all members of the Church join with Mary, our Mother, in praying for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that with new ardor, new methods and new expression all may take up the mission to go out to all the world and proclaim the good news! (cf. Mk 16:15). “O Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us!”