



Marian Doctrine and Devotion

Chapter 21



Marian devotions are those prayers and acts undertaken to honor Mary and with the intent of seeking her intercession with her Son, Jesus, and his Father. Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not, however, amount to worship - which is reserved for God alone. Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed a three-level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* that applies to God, the Virgin Mary and then to the other saints.

The Roman Catholic Church holds many teachings associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Four of these specific doctrines have been raised to the level of dogma, meaning in technical terms that they must be held by the faithful as essential to participation as Roman Catholics. The four Marian dogmas have been defined by the magisterium over the course of Christian history, using both Scripture and Sacred Tradition, the two elements of the one source of Revelation, as evidence for these proclamations. These four dogmas are: Mary the Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity of Mary, The Immaculate Conception, and The Assumption of Mary into Heaven. The twentieth-century has seen a significant drive to establish a fifth and final Dogma-Mary as Co-Redemptrix.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

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Apocalypse/Revelation 12:

"And a great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. And being with child, she cried out, laboring in birth, and was in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold a great red dragon... and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered so that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her son was taken up to God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that there they should feed her a thousand two hundred sixty days... . And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child. And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent... . And the dragon was angry against the woman, and went to make war with the rest of her seed... ."

St. Pius X, Ad diem illum. ASS 36. 458—59: "No one of us does not know that that woman signifies the Virgin Mary, who brought forth our Head with her virginity intact. But the Apostle continues: 'And being with child, she cried out, laboring in birth, and was in pain to be delivered. ' Therefore John saw the Most Holy Mother of God already enjoying eternal happiness, and yet laboring from some hidden birth. With what birth? Surely ours, we who, being yet detained in exile, are still to be brought forth to the perfect love of God and eternal happiness."

Pius XII, Munificentissimus Deus. AAS 41. 762-63: "We frequently find theologians and preachers who, following the footsteps of the Holy Fathers, use words and events from sacred Scripture with some freedom to explain their belief in the Assumption... . And furthermore, the Scholastic doctors have considered the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God as signified not only in the various figures of the Old Testament, but also in that woman clothed with the sun, whom the Apostle John contemplated on the island of Patmos."

Paul VI, Signum Magnum, May 13, 1967 AAS 59: "The great sign which the Apostle John saw in heaven, 'a woman clothed with the sun' is interpreted by the sacred liturgy, not without foundation, as referring to the most Blessed Mary, the Mother of all men by the grace of Christ the Redeemer."

John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater, March 15, 1987. Vatican Translation. #24: "... she who was the one 'full of grace' was brought into the mystery of Christ in order to be his Mother and thus the Holy Mother of God, through the Church remains in that mystery as 'the woman' spoken of by the Book of Genesis (3:15) at the beginning and by the Apocalypse (12:1) at the end of the history of salvation."

Comments: 1. St. Pius X says flatly that John saw Mary in this passage. Pius XII is less clear, he attributes the interpretation to the Fathers and Scholastic Doctors. Paul VI says the liturgy sees her in this text "not without foundation". But John Paul II is rather explicit. 2. Some features of the image surely fit Our Lady, specially the rule "with an iron rod" which clearly reflects Psalm 2. 9 speaking of the Messiah. Yet the pain in birth seems to be more apt for the Church than for Our Lady. Hence it is likely we have here a well known Hebrew pattern, in which an individual stands for, and even is identified with a group. Then it will be both Mary and the Church. For an excellent defense of the view that the woman is both Mary and the Church, cf. B. J. Le Frois, *The Woman Clothed with the Sun*, Orbis Catholicus, Rome, 1954. Le Frois suggests that if the image stands for both Mary and the Church, then it could be a forecast that before the end of time, the Church will take on especially Marian character, an age of Mary. St. Louis de Montfort in *True Devotion* #49 predicts an age of Mary.