

Sermon on the Mount, he presents a new and more perfect way, a way profoundly lived in the life of Mary.

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Mary stands with and for the poor of God, placing her trust and her life in God’s hands.
- “Blessed are those who mourn.” The scene of Mary at Calvary reminds us how she mourned and suffered with her Son for the sins of the world.
- “Blessed are the meek.” Mary knows her place and lets her Son be the center of her life and the center of those who follow him.
- “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.” In her Magnificat Mary prays and commits herself to the God who brings down the mighty and exalts the humble.
- Blessed are the merciful.” Mary’s compassion stretches to Elizabeth, to the newly married couple at Cana, and amidst her own suffering, to the beloved disciple on Calvary.
- “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Mary, ever virgin, dedicates all her life and energy to the cause and call of God.
- “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Mary gave birth to the Prince of Peace, and prayerfully waits with the apostles at Pentecost for the coming of the Spirit of Peace.
- “Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the cause of right.” Like the Israelite people, Mary suffers exile in Egypt. With her Son, Jesus, she suffers on Calvary and shows that life is stronger than death, that God’s mercy and justice are more powerful than human sinfulness.

Mary is the Mother of God, type and Mother of the Church, and ever a virgin, but we end where we began. Mary is model of faith and perfect disciple. She is the woman of courage who followed her Son to the cross; a wife, mother, and widow; a refugee, the mother of a prisoner, the victim of persecution, the woman who in her Magnificat announces the downfall of the powerful and the vindication of the oppressed.

We are challenged to imitate her faith and her discipleship which we are challenged to follow in response to the love of God. This is what Jesus pointed to when he said, “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it” (Lk. 11:28).

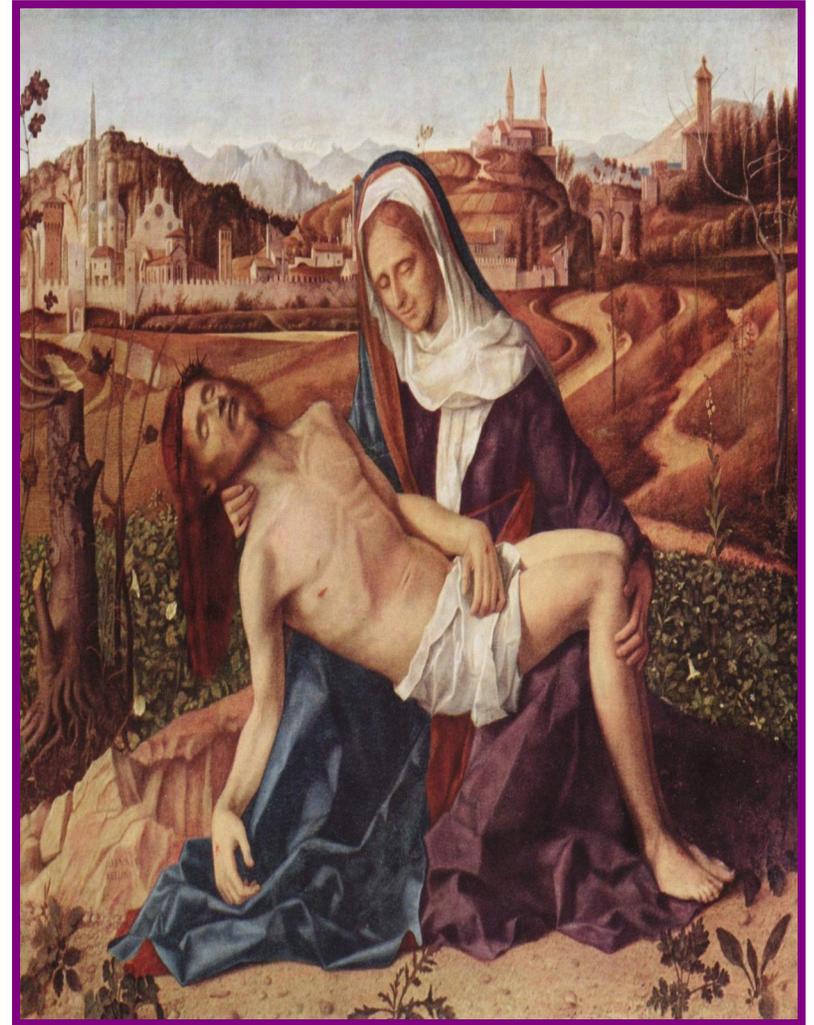
N.B. The material contained in these three pamphlets were reviewed and commented on by: Bishop Edmund Fitzgibbon
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Mary, Model of faith

and

Perfect Disciple



Part III of III

Reflections on the Study of the Life of Mary-III

By: Peter Schineller, S.J.

In statements 10-12, we step back from specific focus upon the faith of Mary. In this last segment, we will show how Catholic teaching on Mary is illuminative, indicative and representative of the Roman Catholic tradition.

Statement-10

Catholic teaching on Mary is paradigmatic for Catholic theology. That is, it reveals and points to the specifically Catholic emphasis upon sacramentally, meditation, incarnation and the ecclesial character of faith.

What makes Catholicism stand out as specifically different from the many Christian denominations? A deeper and more basic religious or theological level of examination into what is specifically Catholic will be discussed, and then linked with the importance of Mary in the Catholic faith. God is not a distant Creator. God is found mediated in and through the creation He made. God chooses to be close to the creature, He reveals his power, love and glory in and through creatures, especially human persons. Thus Catholicism has an array of saints, with Mary Queen of All Saints. Glory given to God's children is glory given to their Creator. God is honored when His saints are honored. The seven sacraments are used to mediate God's life and love to basic moments of human existence. The sacraments use created matter such as bread and wine, oil and water to be vehicles of divine life.

We believe that the Church is holy (as well as sinful). It is not simply a distant creator or redeemer but incarnate and mediated through the Church. The Church, like Mary, is not only a place but an instrument of divine grace. Holiness adheres in the Church as a gift of God to the members. God truly dwells in and with his people in his Spirit given to the Church.

Roman Catholicism takes our humanity and human freedom with utmost seriousness. We are called upon to freely respond to God as Mary did in her "fiat". Devotion to Mary is therefore an exemplary tradition of Catholicism. While Jesus remains the one unique mediator, the prime sacrament, we believe that with Jesus and because of him, we have other persons and signs that embody and reveal the mystery of God's love. We believe in the communion of saints. Primary among them is Mary, blessed among all women. Mary is a model for the Church in her faithful, graced, generous cooperative response to God's call.

Statement-11

While fostering these positive of "the catholic substance," we must also be aware of the dangers in misunderstanding or exaggerating these values.

In a Pastoral Letter, Mary, our Mother and Model, issued for the Marian Year 1987-1988, the Bishops of Nigeria, pointed to two extreme attitudes towards Mary. The one, found mainly outside of Catholicism, treats all honor to Mary as idolatrous. It overlooks the fact that in the Scriptures, Mary has been declared destined to be called "blessed" by all generations (Lk. 1:48).

The other extreme, the Bishops call an "exaggerated and near-idolatrous Marian devotion." These devotees tend to make Mary the counterpart or equal to Jesus. They are clearly out of tune with the Church. This type of devotion also harms the cause of Christian unity and must be avoided.

Devotion to Mary is improper if we think that *only* through Mary do we have access to Jesus or to the Father. If we think that God is remote, and we absolutely need Mary as a bridge to that distant God, then our understanding of Mary is incorrect. Rather we should say that Jesus is brought closer to us through Mary, that Jesus is the one, sufficient mediator between God and the human. The greatness of Mary is not to form a bridge between us and a remote God, but to enable Christ to be close to us. Devotion to Mary must follow the instruction of John the Baptist, pointing the way to Jesus, who must increase as we decrease (Jn. 3:30). Pope Paul VI writes that devotion to Mary does not stop with her, but by its very nature, leads us to Christ. (Address of 21 Nov., 1964).

Statement-12

In summary fashion, Mary is model of Christian faith and perfect disciple insofar as she exemplifies the life of the Beatitudes.

Sometimes we might be tempted to think that Mary is the exception, that Mary is far superior to us and different from us in view of her holiness and special mission. We must end by recalling that she is fully human, like us. Jesus, in his own example and teaching, shows his disciples the type of life that leads to eternal life. While Jesus expects us to keep the law of the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments, in his