

The Mystical Union Between The Holy Spirit and Mary

In current literature the cry resounds: You make too much of Mary; we want to hear about the Holy Spirit. This is the modern version of the older complaint that we put Mary on the same level as Jesus. In regard to this latter objection Cardinal Newman with his usual effectiveness makes the comment that we only put Mary in Jesus' place if we have brought him down to the purely human plane. Something of the same argument would apply to the other allegation. We only put the Holy Spirit and Mary in each other's places if we confuse their roles. This we must not do.

In a sense it would be as wrong to substitute the Holy Spirit for Mary as to do the reverse. The omission of one or the other mutilates the divine scheme.

A Union allowing Total Freedom

Mary is an essential part of God's plan of grace. In Redemption she was the new Eve beside the new Adam. In the bestowing of the fruits of Redemption she has an

equivalent association with the Holy Spirit. Their relation is somewhat incorrectly called that of spouses, but her part is different to that. She is the channel of his graces, but she is no mere distribution mechanism. She is a co-operating person with a completely unfettered freedom of action.

She is filled with the Holy Spirit without being at the same time constrained in the slightest by him. Her own will and action are neither dispensed with nor limited. It is the incomprehensible wonder of God's Providence that the more he is in possession of a soul the more free that soul is. Mary therefore is distributing the graces of the Holy Spirit with a complete freedom. The paragraph of the Legion Promise on that subject, which some look on as a hard saying, accurately declares: 'That it is by her, to whom she please, and in the quantity and manner she pleases, that all his gifts and graces are administered.' And of course that promise is not original in saying that; it only repeats the saints.

The essential freedom of the human will is a first principle of theology. Yet some learned ones seem to have difficulty in applying it to Mary. They grant it to the ordinary person but cannot accept that those actions of hers which affect the fate of all mankind, can really have been left quite free to her. This is inconsistent. The Redemption and its consequences were built upon the co-operation of mankind and on its free acceptance by Mary acting as representative of the human race. Therefore that freedom must find its full expression in the Incarnation. It would be incongruous and an anti-climax if it were suppressed at that decisive moment when Mary, being both representative and choicest specimen of mankind, would be expected to exhibit that freedom in its perfection.

This is not a little unlike the modern perversity which rules out the existence of Original Sin but in the same breath denies the Immaculate Conception. In other words everyone is immaculate except the Virgin Mary. This has a touch of insanity about it. But I contend that the same feature will show itself the moment one errs in his attitude towards Our Lady; one is found offending against right reason. It looks as if by repudiating her, one automatically rejects what she stands for. And she stands for the human intellect in its utmost integrity, undefiled by original sin. Deny her in the smallest way and soon there will be a collision with common sense.

She is a sort of blueprint for human behaviour. She represents the perfect mind oriented towards God. Any deviation from that blueprint betokens some lack of alignment with God himself, and sooner or later this will show itself in damaging ways. The dry-rot spreads to our attitude to the angels, sin, the divinity of Christ, the Holy Spirit and finally God himself. I think it is true to say that the simpler person who has his principles right in regard to Our Lady will walk a straight path and go far, while the learned ones with everything in their kit except Mary will make headway like the ship without compass and rudder.

Protestants Accuse Us of Putting Mary Where the Holy Spirit Should Be

Some years ago an ingenious idea came to certain Protestant theologians which they proceeded to promulgate. Of course some of their Catholic fraternity took it up with due reverence, and now I see that it is being seriously discussed. It is the notion which I started off by referring to, that Catholics have substituted the Blessed Virgin for the Holy Spirit; wherever he should appear we put her; wherever he

should be given praise, we mention her instead. He is ruled out; she is exaggerated practically or actually to the divine level; we are treating Mary as a goddess!

On the part of its Protestant originators that folly is due to the fact that they do not know any better. So we must say: Father forgive them. On the part of the Catholics who echo them, it may be due to wickedness because they know it is not true. But perhaps it springs from the law which I have been proposing, namely that those who shut their eyes to Mary fail as a consequence to see any portion of the divine scenery.

Of course all those critics and attackers have their remedy for that improper promotion of the Blessed Virgin. It is that she is relegated to her true station, by which they mean a virtual nothingness. Then the Holy Spirit will come into his own place from which she had been excluding him!

At this the critics will no doubt protest and say that it is none of their intention to do away with Our Lady; their purpose is to bring things into their proper proportion. But what is this correct proportion? When is Mary to enter in? Will those persons specify for us the occasions when she can be mentioned without putting her in the place of the Holy Spirit? Do they not realise that if their argument about substitution be correct in general, it will be assumed to apply even to a single reference?

Moreover, it would be impracticable and ridiculous to allocate a certain proportion of our attention to Mary and the remainder to the Holy Spirit. Because the moment that idea gets currency that she is trespassing on his territory, everyone is made tender and timid about her, even to the extent of a single mention of her name. This would devastate the whole idea of devotion to her.

Catholics Compromise with Sad Results

The point of view of the non-Catholics who say that devotion to Mary excludes the Holy Spirit is clear and simple. They regard her as having no function in the order of grace and they object to her being treated as if she had a place. But it is distressing to see that line of argument being taken up so keenly by Catholic writers. How radically opposed is it to what the Vatican Council has taught about her. There is a blank silence about those wonderful things, and a clamour about her robbery of the Holy Spirit. What sort of Catholicism is this?

It is implied by such persons that the Holy Spirit would automatically receive the devotion which had previously been given to the Blessed Virgin. I make the ironic comment that not so many outside the Church would today believe in the Holy Ghost as a real distinct person whereas devotion to Mary carries securely with it a belief in him.

Secondly, what happens to Mary when every mention of her has been substituted by a naming of the Holy Spirit? Where would we stand when we would have eliminated her in that drastic manner? I answer bluntly that we would stand on Protestant ground; we would have crossed over the frontier from Catholicism. The fact is that Mary has a definite place in Catholic theology and tradition. She is a vital part of the fabric of religion. Pope Paul insists that she is intrinsic in Christianity; that is she is of the inner essence, such that if she is removed, the integrity is destroyed. The substance is not the same; it is no longer authentic Christianity. It is something else. It is counterfeit.

How are we to resolve that question of the relation of the Holy Ghost to Mary? What are their respective places?

When are we to mention the one and when the other? Let us metaphorically remove our shoes and on our knees approach this holy subject.

It would be wrong in the higher degree to replace the Holy Spirit by the Blessed Virgin, but likewise it would be contrary to the divine idea to omit the Blessed Virgin because both have their own specific roles which are complimentary to each other. Neither must be absent or else the structure is damaged. There is no need to argue about the paramount place of the Holy Spirit. The question is about the legitimacy and the degree and the manner of our attention to Mary. Does a reference to her amount to an exclusion of the Holy Spirit?

The fact is the startling one; that it was the pleasure of the Holy Trinity to make Redemption depend on the will of a creature, the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was to will Redemption; otherwise it would not be wrought. All this is too much for many among us just as it was too much for Lucifer and his adherents. They will not have it so. The Incarnation and the Redemption and the fate of the whole human race are things too immense to be made the plaything of a young girl's choice! God himself could not act with such lack of seriousness as that! That is wild talk. It was for that very reason that the rebel angels refused to accept the Incarnation.

The Holy Spirit and Mary Together Bring Forth the Holy One

The answer is that if God has ordained things thus, then there is no impossibility and no impropriety. Rather his method displays his wisdom and his abysmal love. He intends not only to uplift from the depths his fallen creatures but by an expedient of sheerest genius to

transport them to the celestial heights. He is not content to save us outright. He invites us to work out our salvation to the limit of our capacity and then he embellishes that gift of ours in innumerable ways. He so contrives things that we almost seem to be putting him under an obligation to us. We are to be treated as if we had really earned Heaven, and there we will enjoy the lofty status of which Mary is now the type, the present exponent.

The beginning of that wonderful plan was to set in the Virgin Mary. In her God saw the possibility of that exaltation of man. She alone possessed the germ of virtue he could expand into his mystery of love.

Mary's co-operation in faith and love was the foundation stone of the Incarnation. The Holy Spirit comes upon her and together they bring forth the Holy One, the Son of God. That constitutes the history and the pattern of every grace. Grace flows by the power and operation of the Holy Spirit but always in concert with Mary. Virtue consists in our entering into that disposition of things, so that it would be destructive to minimise Mary on any pretext whatsoever. As God has made things depend on her, he likewise requires that her office be recognised.

The law of worship requires that we acknowledge the services rendered to us by the Heavenly Powers, greater or lesser. We must thank St Anthony for having found our fountain pen for us, or St Blaise for having cured our throat, or our guardian angel for his uninterrupted care of us. In higher measure we must testify our gratitude to her who not only opened up Redemption to us but continues to administer its fruits to us as our veritable Mother.

At the moment of the Incarnation the Blessed Virgin was associated to the generation of the Eternal Son and thereby was brought into a permanent state of union

with the Third Divine Person, which was the most intense that could be established without removing her from the human condition. It involved a participation by the one, in the action of the other. They would work together in a sort of identity.

No Passing Phase but an On-going Partnership

Of course this could mean her being no more than a channel which would convey. Even that would be a supreme condescension to her. But that would be the reversal of the original divine intention which viewed her as responsible. She was to be given in the administration of grace the same decisive activity which she had exercised in the Incarnation.

She is made a true co-operator; that is the flow of grace is caused to depend on her. God treats her as if she were on equal terms with him, just as in the holy home of Nazareth she was in every sense the mother. She was no marionette or automation, deprived of real responsibility because her child was so great. Just the contrary. Because she represented the human race and embodied the vital element of human co-operation, she was the mother par excellence, above any other, more responsible, more free. Her personality was rich beyond all imagining. It had to be because it was from her in a natural way that Jesus would receive his mentality and intellectual gifts, and the formation of his character. In talking of her we need not fear exaggeration.

To give any idea as to how the Holy Spirit and Mary exercise their joint administration is so far beyond our power that any attempt must verge on the ridiculous. But let us at least talk about it, encouraged by the manner in which the Old Testament shows God and man as deliberating in human fashion.

The Holy Spirit holds constant counsel with Mary and necessarily allows her the fullest opportunity of asserting her will and expressing every other aspect of her personality. Otherwise the co-operation would be unreal. We have to think of them as considering every need and every soul with all the attendant circumstances, and of coming to decisions which are at once put into force. At the same time we must realise that things do not operate on that natural plane. There would not be a debate as we would conceive it, nor any question of a difference of opinion which might have to be resolved by the invoking of his superior power. Our contemplation strains towards higher levels than that human picture, but alas we have not the spiritual wings.

Mary, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the mother of every man, is divinely equipped to be fully effective in that partnership of grace. In God she minutely sees her earthly domain and she understands the necessities of each of her children. But how can it be that absolutely everything she asks for them is in accordance with the divine will and is sure of acceptance? Let us inspect this vital point

Her Decision was Free, Yet the World was Safe

As already said, the ordinary person has free will. In a much more eminent and in every act of her life the Blessed Virgin has always possessed that faculty. We can reason that out. She is the Immaculate Conception, the unspoilt human being. She must show forth all the attributes of human nature, free will included, in their ultimate perfection. But on the other hand her acts were to have such surpassing consequences that it is hard to conceive them as being left to her completely unconstrained will. And weaker faith recoils from such a prodigy.

For example nobody outside the Church will accept the idea that the salvation of the world could be committed to her final determination and yet be completely safe. But according to the divine design, that had to be. As she was consulted by the Angel of the Annunciation, it follows that she was to make a real decision. Furthermore, that decision must necessarily be utterly perfect in its character; it had to be the most-free exercise of freewill which would ever be. This is the very essence of that moment which is central in all time. If Mary is truly being consulted, the transaction must be as authentic as God himself can make it.

The secret lies in her perfection, her absolute purity in every respect. Freewill means that we can choose. Our use of it is complicated by the whirlwind in us and around us which tugs at us from opposite angles. Mary had only one preoccupation. It was her heavenly Father. Every aspect of her being gravitated towards him, and she gave herself to him with a completeness which only infinity could exceed. Nothing distracted her. No doubt the whirlwind of the world circled around her and tore at her, but never did she waver; never for a single moment did her will flicker away from its objective.

Viewed in this way, the problem shrinks into a simplicity. God can entrust anything to the unrestricted disposal of that wondrous creature. Once she knows what he desires, that suffices. So where is the conflict between her freewill and his plan of restoration? Where is the difficulty in the archangels' putting the fate of all men into her human hands? What does God wish? That is all she requires to know. Her decision is free, yet the world is safe.

Likewise the Holy Spirit Can Safely Entrust the Disposal of His Graces to Her

Just to the same simplicity may we reduce that joint administration of the Holy Spirit and Mary. With all her heart and with all the fullness of her will she reflects his will. It is not being forced upon her; she could not possess greater freedom nor exercise it more fully. Such is the delightful marvel of the divine plan that it would even be possible for the Holy Spirit to confide to her the entire management of his graces; and yet the result would be the very same as if he worked alone.

What a miracle of love all this presents to us, whereby the will of God operates in its fullness and where the Virgin is likewise free in her housekeeping for all her children, feeding them, clothing them, teaching them, in the order of grace. To draw full profit from that mighty miracle we must enter comprehendingly into it. Throughout all time and even before time, God has built on Mary. In his design she comprised us and represented us, and now she is our mother. I repeat that in that capacity she is no mere channel, however unobstructive, of the divine bounty. She is a responsible administrator. No mother could be as much a mother as she is.

From our almost ecstatic admiration of those heavenly arrangements we are brutally recalled to earth by writings such as those referred to at the outset. Their insistence of the primacy of the Holy Spirit to the extent of hesitating to mention Mary's name, runs counter to the essence of God's plan and is purely mischievous.

It is painful to find persons, who have at least the ability to write articles, displaying a childishness when they treat about Mary. They subject the supernatural to natural rules: If you address the Blessed Virgin, you turn away from the

Holy Spirit! Apparently it is only the direct approach that counts! But this is positively infantile. Drawn to its logical conclusion, it would mean that if we are engaged on an absorbing duty which prevents from thinking expressly of God, then we are leaving him aside.

On the contrary, God is to be found less surely in feelings of fervour than in right intention, in true doctrine, in proper principles, and in the fulfilment of duty. Incidentally Mary is the embodiment and prime model of all those pathways to God and she leads us along them.

The union established in the Incarnation between the Holy Spirit and Mary persists forever. She is with him in all he does; it is not our thinking of her that makes her present. The development of this idea leads us into luxuriant fields of meditation which reveal her where we had not thought her to be.

The Rosary Shows Her Mediation in Action

The mystery of the Rosary which follows that of the Incarnation is Mary's momentous visit to Elizabeth bearing her Divine Son within her. Out from them goes the healing grace when the two mothers meet. Likewise with Mary is the Holy Spirit. The sanctifying of St John is his first official bestowal of grace in conjunction with Mary. It is her first appearance in her role of Mediatrix of Grace.

And later on when Mary fulfils that solemn requirement of the Old Law in presenting her 'First Born' to his heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit was invisibly performing that ritual with her and imparting to it its true significance and value. But her part was not the less essential. She was representing every other mother who would perform that rite symbolically.

At Cana, which prefigures the Last Supper, we witness the dramatic intervention of Mary. But she is not present at the Last Supper itself when the miracle of the Eucharist is inaugurated. Yet we feel that she, who gave us Christ's body originally, should be there as a very part of the mystery. Many of the saints have it so, and speak of her as being in an adjacent room and as receiving Holy Communion after the ceremony itself. That may have been the case. But really there is no need to have recourse to any such a solution. For the Holy Spirit was brooding over the making of the Eucharist just as he had been over the making of Our Lord's actual body. He operated the one as he did the other through Mary. In him she was equally present in the Incarnation and in the instituting of the Eucharist, visibly in the former, invisibly but as truly in the latter.

A further exemplification of that persisting fruitful union is contained in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples. The Acts describe it to us: 'Suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting and there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:2-4).

We must not think that he had to make a journey from on high. Indeed he had not. He was already present in that assembly, hidden in Mary, fulfilling the days of waiting on the Promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). The traditional idea that the tongues of fire emanated from Mary would represent justified thinking. It would visibly manifest her in the role which it has always been her destiny to fulfil. She inaugurated the Mystical Body of Christ just as she had conceived and given birth to his actual body. She is

Mater Ecclesiae with the same trueness that she is *Mater Christi*.

After the Descent, the Rosary presents the Assumption. In that mystery Our Lady is popularly believed to have been transported to Heaven by angels, visible or invisible. The idea is that in contrast with Our Lord's Ascension she is carried in order to denote her inferior human condition. But might we not suppose that as the living abode of the Holy Spirit she is in a category of her own and would, like her son, ascend to her kingdom without angelic help?

From the foregoing it will be evident why you have been recommended to recognise in the Rosary the best prayer to the Holy Spirit.

'Fear Not to take Mary ...'

Devotion to Mary is not a 'may' but a 'must'. She is not divine so that we do not adore her. That granted, there need be no restriction on the quantity or manner of our approach to her. Whether we go direct to the Divine Persons or to her amounts to the same thing; all goes to God. We do not turn away from the others by speaking to one. Even in the physical order that need not be the case. The same glance takes in the woman and the child in her arms. But the supernatural rises far above the need for supplying ourselves with any such images. Mary is in the Holy Spirit with such intensity that they are virtually one and with identity of action, so that devotion to one comprises devotion to the other. Let such be our intention. Concentrate as we wish on either but keep the other in our secondary vision.

In any case it would be impracticable to apportion our prayers between them. How much would we give to her? Five or ten or fifteen per cent; the notion would only be

absurd. The idea of any sort of shares would be impossible. Applied to God himself, how would we allocate as between the Three Persons?

It is the affectation on behalf of many today to stress the Holy Spirit as if the other Divine Persons had no existence. Mary is mentioned by them as a grudging gesture, and it will be noted that 'there is no room in the inn' for Jesus either.

The simplest apportionment is to follow the traditional freedom allowed by the Church, making sure not to be sparing in regard to Mary. So far from monopolising to herself what is offered to her, it is all passed on along with her own considerable supplement. In a real way, too, she helps our poor intellect to some comprehension of the Trinity and the necessary distinction between the Three Divine Persons. It is likely that without her help we would not find our way in regard to that doctrine and other doctrines minor to it. She is veritably the guardian of Christian Doctrine. Remove her and the edifice begins to crumble.

Pelbartus, one of the great writers of the Church, considers the case where certain holy persons are so seized by love for Mary that they seem to be absorbed by her rather than by the Divine Persons; they are impelled to direct to her the bulk of their prayers. What is to be thought of this?

The writer says that in those persons we must see the action of the Holy Spirit who is utilising them to afford a human expression of the superlative love which the Eternal Father has for his daughter; which Jesus has for his mother; and which the Holy Spirit himself lavishes on the unparalleled woman who has been his helpmate in creation. It is part of the divine idea that this love of

the Blessed Trinity for her, who has been styled their complement, should be reproduced in dramatic manner by the Mystical Body through some of its members. In like manner every special feature of Our Lord is almost sensationaly projected by different saints.

So if we should feel that ardent attraction towards Mary, we need not be made apprehensive by suggestions that we would be depriving God of honour due to him. For it is he who is drawing us into the communion of grace which he has with Mary. They may be planning to use us.