

# Our Lady's Presence in the Mass in the Teaching of Pope John Paul II

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## I. Introduction\*

The link between the celebration of the Eucharist and the commemoration of the Mother of God is one that is already found in the earliest Christian documents on the Eucharistic Liturgy and it is more than probable that the oral tradition antedates the written, with roots deriving from the era of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> The ancient practice is echoed in the sound instinct of the faithful that Mary cannot be separated from her Son, especially at the moment when his sacrifice is being renewed on the altar and is confirmed in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which explicitly states that

in celebrating this annual cycle of the mysteries of Christ, the holy Church venerates with special love the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, united by an inseparable bond with the saving work of her Son [*In hoc annuo mysteriorum Christi circulo celebrando, Sancta Ecclesia Beatam Mariam Dei Genetricem cum peculiari amore veneratur, quae indissolubili nexu cum Filii sui opere salutari coniungitur*].<sup>2</sup>

In fact, this solemn statement reflects with accuracy the unique position accorded to Mary in the venerable Roman Canon (First Eucharistic Prayer) where she is commemorated in an altogether special way: *Communicantes, et memoriam venerantes, in primis gloriosa semper Virginis Maria, Genetricis Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Giuseppe Crocetti, S.S.S., *Maria e l'Eucaristia nella Chiesa* (Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2001)149-160 and the many excellent articles on this theme in Ermanno M. Toniolo, O.S.M. (ed.), *Maria e l'Eucaristia* (Rome: Centro di Cultura Mariana «Madre della Chiesa», 2000) and *Liturgie dell'Oriente Cristiano a Roma nell'Anno Mariano (1987-88): Testi e Studi* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> The Pope cited this particular text in §78 of his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* of May 31, 1998 [*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana) hereafter cited as *Inseg* XXI/1 (1998) 1184; *Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English; First number = cumulative edition number; second number = page) hereafter cited as *ORE* 1549:X].

<sup>3</sup> Sadly, by refusing to translate *in primis* the I.C.E.L. translation does not do full justice to Our Lady's position, even if she still retains the first place chronologically.

To my knowledge, no Pope ever reflected upon and taught more authoritatively about the “inseparable bond” between Mary and the Eucharist than did Pope John Paul II. While his crowning achievement in calling special attention to this bond is the sixth chapter of his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (§53-58) which he entitled “At the School of Mary, ‘Woman of the Eucharist’”, this was by no means his only contribution on this subject. He gave regular and deliberate attention to this theme in the course of his long pontificate of over twenty-six years, even if this may have been more apparent from the time of the publication of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* on 17 April 2003 until his death when he frequently referred to Mary as the “Woman of the Eucharist”. In analyzing the many references hidden in numerous documents and addresses, I hope to draw out his magisterial teaching on Mary’s indissoluble link with the Eucharist and particularly her presence in the Mass, a teaching which he presented with consistency and conviction, a teaching which constitutes a precious patrimony for the entire Church.

## II. Mary’s Mediating Presence in the Mystery of Christ

In §22 of his programmatic first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* of March 4, 1979, John Paul II had already sketched Mary’s presence in the mystery of the Redemption and in Christian life in broad strokes which were at the same time pregnant with meaning to be further developed, effectively insisting that her mediation is absolutely unique and that consequently she “must be on all the ways of the Church’s daily life”:

For if we feel a special need, in this difficult and responsible phase of the history of the Church and of mankind, to turn to Christ, who is Lord of the Church and Lord of man’s history on account of the mystery of the Redemption, we believe that nobody else can bring us as Mary can into the divine and human dimension of this mystery. Nobody has been brought into it by God himself as Mary has. It is in this that the exceptional character of the grace of the divine Motherhood consists. Not only is the dignity of this Motherhood unique and unrepeatable in the history of the human race, but Mary’s participation, due to this Maternity, in God’s plan for man’s salvation through the mystery of the Redemption is also unique in profundity and range of action. [*Nemo ut Maria eo introductus est ab ipso Deo. In hoc quippe singularis indoles gratiae maternitatis divina consistit. Non solum est unica minimeque iterabilis huius maternitatis dignitas in humani generis historia, sed unica etiam – quod attinet ad eius profunditatem et ad amplitudinem eius*

*actionis – participatio est, qua Maria, propter eandem maternitatem, consilio divino de salute humana communicavit per mysterium Redemptionis] ...*

The special characteristic of the motherly love that the Mother of God inserts in the mystery of the Redemption and the life of the Church finds expression in its exceptional closeness to man and all that happens to him. It is in this that the mystery of the Mother consists. The Church, which looks to her with altogether special love and hope, wishes to make this mystery her own in an ever deeper manner. For in this the Church also recognizes the way for her daily life, which is each person.

The Father's eternal love, which has been manifested in the history of mankind through the Son whom the Father gave, "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life", comes close to each of us through this Mother and thus takes on tokens that are of more easy understanding and access by each person. Consequently, Mary must be on all the ways for the Church's daily life. Through her maternal presence the Church acquires certainty that she is truly living the life of her Master and Lord and that she is living the mystery of the Redemption in all its life-giving profundity and fullness [*Eternus Patris amor, qui in historia humani generis per Filium est manifestatus, quem Pater dedit, «ut omnis qui credit in eum non pereat, sed habeat vitam aeternam», nobis offertur per hanc Matrem atque hoc modo signa accipit ad intellegendum accommodatiora et faciliora homini. Ita fit, ut Maria in omnibus viis cotidiana vita Ecclesiae versetur oporteat. Eo quod ut Mater praesens adest, Ecclesia certum habet se reapse vitam vivere Magistri sui et Domini, se e mysterio vivere Redemptionis cum tota eius vivificatoria plenitudine*].<sup>4</sup>

While the Pope does not speak explicitly here of Mary's relationship to the Sacraments and to the Eucharist, he lays a solid foundation for understanding it which I would summarize in the following points. (1) In accord with the great tradition, he emphasizes the uniqueness of Our Lady's divine maternity and her participation in the mystery of the Redemption. (2) He declares that the eternal love of the Father, manifested through the Son, comes close to us through the Mother. He presents it as axiomatic that "no one can bring us into the divine and human mystery of the Redemption as Mary can" precisely because "nobody has been brought into it by God himself as Mary has". Although he would draw out the nature of

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<sup>4</sup> *Inseg* II/1 (1979) 607-608 [U.S.C.C. Edition 97, 98].

this maternal mediation and its mode of operation at much greater length in the third part of his Marian Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (§38-47) and in many other places<sup>5</sup>, the foundation already appears here: “Mary’s participation ... in God’s plan for man’s salvation ... is ... unique in profundity and range of action”. (3) Thus he concludes that Mary must be on all the ways of the Church’s daily life.

In §9 of his next Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia* of November 30, 1980, the Pope presented Mary as the Mother of Mercy, underscoring that she was uniquely called to bring people close to the mystery of mercy:

Mary is also the one who obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has. At the same time, still in an exceptional way, she made possible with the sacrifice of her heart her own sharing in revealing God’s mercy. This sacrifice is intimately linked with the cross of her Son, at the foot of which she was to stand on Calvary. Her sacrifice is a unique sharing in the revelation of mercy, that is, a sharing in the absolute fidelity of God to His own love, to the covenant that He willed from eternity and that He entered into in time with man, with the people, with humanity; it is a sharing in that revelation that was definitively fulfilled through the cross. No one has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the crucified One, the mystery of the cross, the overwhelming encounter of divine transcendent justice with love: that “kiss” given by mercy to justice. No one has received into his heart, as much as Mary did, that mystery, that truly divine dimension of the redemption effected on Calvary by means of the death of the Son, together with the sacrifice of her maternal heart, together with her definitive “fiat” [*Maria insuper est, quæ singulari prorsus extraordinarioque pacto – sicut alius nemo – misericordiam cognovit et eodem tempore item eximio perquam modo consecuta est cordis sui sacrificio, ut propria evenire posset participatio sua ipsius revelationis divinæ misericordiae. Quod sacrificium proxime coheret cum eius Filii cruce, sub qua etiam ille in Calvariae loco adstitit. Ipsius proinde sacrificium hoc peculiaris omnino communicatio est in patefacienda misericordia; nempe communicatio est absolutæ Dei fidelitatis erga proprium amorem ad fœdus, quod inde ab ævo sempiterno voluit quodque in tempore pepigit cum homine, cum populo, cum genere humano; participatio*

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<sup>5</sup> For an excellent introduction to Marian mediation in John Paul II, cf. Manfred Hauke, “La Mediazione materna di Maria secondo papa Giovanni Paolo II,” *Maria Corredentrice: Storia e Teologia* VII (Frigento: Casa Mariana Editrice, 2005) 35-91.

*est revelationis illius, quæ semel est in æternum per crucem transacta. Similis Maria, Crucifixi Matris, nemo mysterium crucis est expertus, hoc est iustitiæ transcendentis divinæ cum amore consternantem congressionem: «osculum» illud iustitiæ impertitum a misericordia. Similis Maria hoc mysterium animo nemo suscepit: eam rationem vere divinam redemptionis, quæ per Filii mortem in Calvaria monte acta est una cum materni cordis eius sacrificio et cum decretoria ipsius «fiat»].*

Mary, then, is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is [*Ergo Maria ea quidem est quæ divinæ misericordiæ interius percipit mysterium; cuius præterea novit pretium intellegitque ipsum quam sit magnificum*]. In this sense, we call her the Mother of mercy: Our Lady of mercy, or Mother of divine mercy; in each one of these titles there is a deep theological meaning, for they express the special preparation of her soul, of her whole personality, so that she was able to perceive, through the complex events, first of Israel, then of every individual and of the whole of humanity, that mercy of which "from generation to generation" people become sharers according to the eternal design of the most Holy Trinity.

The above titles which we attribute to the Mother of God speak of her principally, however, as the Mother of the crucified and risen One; as the One who, having obtained mercy in an exceptional way, in an equally exceptional way "merits" that mercy throughout her earthly life and, particularly, at the foot of the cross of her Son; and finally as the one who, through her hidden and at the same time incomparable sharing in the messianic mission of her Son, was called in a special way to bring close to people that love which He had come to reveal [*de illa nempe, quæ more extraordinario misericordiam experta «meretur» aquabili modo talem misericordiam progrediente omni sua vita terrestri ac præsertim infra Filii crucem; ac de ea tandem, quæ absconditam incomparabilemque simul per communionem messianici Filii sui muneris destinata peculiari ratione est ad hominibus illum apportandum amorem, quem ipse revelatum venerat*].<sup>6</sup>

With a few bold strokes the Pope sketches once again the mystery of Mary and her unique role in the work of our redemption. (1) He begins by stating that she

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<sup>6</sup> *Inseg* III/2 (1980) 1510-1511 [St. Paul Edition 30-31].

“obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has”, thus alluding to the preservative redemption of her Immaculate Conception. (2) Then he states that “the sacrifice of her heart” ... “is a unique sharing in the revelation of mercy”, thus alluding to her intimate union with Jesus in the offering of his perfect sacrifice on Calvary.<sup>7</sup> (3) “No one” he insists “has experienced, to the same degree as the Mother of the crucified One, the mystery of the cross,” hence “she knows its price”.<sup>8</sup> (4) “Having obtained mercy in an exceptional way, in an equally exceptional way” the Mother of mercy “‘merits’ [*meretur*] that mercy throughout her earthly life and, particularly, at the foot of the cross of her Son.”<sup>9</sup> (5) Thus Mary “was called in a special way” to bring to people that love which Jesus “had come to reveal”.<sup>10</sup>

### III. The Profound Link between the Eucharist and Mary

Since “no one can bring us into the divine and human mystery of the Redemption as Mary can” because of her own unique participation in that mystery, then she must be involved *par excellence* in the privileged moment when the Church draws her life from the Eucharist. In fact, in §44 of his Marian Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* of March 25, 1987, John Paul II provided an important confirmation of the fundamental link between Mary and the Eucharist:

Her motherhood is particularly noted and experienced by the Christian people at the *Sacred Banquet* – the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption – at which Christ, his *true body born of the Virgin Mary*, becomes present.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins, “The Heart of Mary as Coredemptrix in the Magisterium of Pope John Paul II” in *S. Tommaso Teologo: Ricerche in occasione dei due centenari accademici* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana “Studi Tomistici” #59, 1995) 320-335.

<sup>8</sup> On the Our Lady’s knowledge of the price [*pretium*] of the redemption, cf. St. Bonaventure, *Collationes de septem donis Spiritus Sancti*, 6 in *Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae ... Opera Omnia*, vol 5, ed PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura (Ad Claras Aquas [Quaracchi]: Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1891), 486.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. St. Pius X’s Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum* of February 2, 1904 in which he speaks of how Mary merited [*promeruit*] to become the reparatrix of the lost world and how she merits [*promere*] *de congruo* what Christ merits *de condigno* [*Acta Sanctae Sedis* hereafter cited as *AAS* 36 (1903-1904) 453-454; *Our Lady: Papal Teachings*, trans. Daughters of St. Paul (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1961) hereafter cited as *OL* #233-234]. For a discussion of this terminology cf. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., “Our Lady’s Coredemption,” in Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. (ed.), *Mariology*, 2 (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1957) 383, 409-411.

<sup>10</sup> This seems to parallel without the use of more technical language St. Pius X’s conclusion about Mary as *princeps largientiarum gratiarum ministra* in *Ad Diem Illum* [*AAS* 36 (1903-1904) 454; *OL* #234].

The piety of the Christian people has always very rightly sensed a *profound link* between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist [*Merito ergo populus christianus pro pietate sua semper arctum nexum inter devotionis officia erga Beatam Mariam Virginem et cultum eucharisticum conspexit*]: this is a fact that can be seen in the liturgy of both the West and the East, in the traditions of the Religious Families, in the modern movements of spirituality, including those for youth, and in the pastoral practice of the Marian Shrines. *Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist* [*Maria fideles ad Eucharistiam deducit*].<sup>11</sup>

Here the Pope does not so much analyze this “profound link” as simply call our attention to it as a fundamental datum, a “given” of the Catholic tradition which he had already commented upon in *Redemptor Hominis* and *Dives in Misericordia*. He summarizes it thus: “Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist”.

In his homily for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi on June 2, 1988, he cited the Second Vatican Council’s teaching in *Lumen Gentium* §58 on Mary’s presence on Calvary and then stated

*The reality of the Sacrifice – res Sacramenti – and the Mother’s Heart pierced with the sword of sorrow under the Cross! The Church has always seen this profound link and has wanted the Mother of God near her on the ways of her Eucharistic pilgrimage through faith. This faith unites each of us with Christ and takes us into the very centre of his redemptive love. Who is closer to this center, who is more united with the Redeemer, if not the Mother, the Heart of the Mother?*<sup>12</sup>

Here he resorts to the symbolic language of the heart, which he had amply developed in other places<sup>13</sup>, in order to emphasize “this profound link” which the Church has always recognized between Mary and the Eucharist. Finally, in his last Holy Thursday Letter to Priests, dated March 13, 2005 from Rome’s Gemelli Polyclinic, he stated once again that:

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<sup>11</sup> *Inseg* X/1 (1987) 734 [St. Paul Edition 63].

<sup>12</sup> *Inseg* XI/2 (1988) 1731 [ORE 1047:11-12].

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins, *Totus Tuus; John Paul II’s Program of Marian Consecration and Entrustment* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate “Studies and Texts”, No. 1, 1992) hereafter cited as *Totus Tuus* 76-79, 248-254; “The Hearts of Jesus and Mary in the Magisterium of Pope John Paul II,” *Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in Civitate Onubensi (Huelva - Hispania) Anno 1992 Celebrati IV: De Cultu Mariano Saeculo XX a Concilio Vaticano II usque ad Nostros Dies* (Vatican City State: Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1999), 147-167.

The relationship between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist is a very close one, as I pointed out in the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (cf. nn. 53-58). In its own sober liturgical language, every Eucharistic Prayer brings this out. Thus in the Roman Canon we say: “In union with the whole Church we honour Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God”. In the other Eucharistic Prayers, honour leads to petition, as for example in Prayer II: “Make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary, the virgin Mother of God.”<sup>14</sup>

#### IV. *Caro Christi, Caro Mariæ*

The unique bond between Mary and the Eucharist was further specified by the Pope, in an Angelus address which he gave in Seville, Spain on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1993:

*Ave verum corpus natum ex Maria Virgine!*

At this hour of the Angelus, when the People of God recall the annunciation to the Virgin Mary of the mystery of the incarnation, the Church’s faith and piety are centred today on Christ, Son of the Virgin Mary, Light of the nations, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist offered to the Father as the glorious victim of reconciliation in the sacrifice of the new and eternal covenant and given to us as the Bread of Life.

St. John wished to combine in his Gospel the revelation of the Eucharistic mystery and a mention of the incarnation. Jesus is the living Bread come down from heaven for the life of the world (cf. Jn. 6:51). The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This leads us to the annunciation, when the Angel of the Lord told Mary the great news and by her free and loving consent, she conceived the Word in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus there is a very close bond between the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, which medieval piety summarized in the expression “*caro Christi, caro Mariæ*”: the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist is sacramentally the flesh he assumed from the Virgin Mary. There-

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<sup>14</sup> *Inseg* XXVIII (2005) 223 [ORE 1886:5].



fore, I wanted to emphasize in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* that “Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist” (n. 44).<sup>15</sup>

By the very use of the Latin citations the Holy Father indicates that he is recapitulating here an insight on the bond between the Eucharist and Mary which has been a part of the Church’s patrimony of faith from its earliest days. *Ave verum corpus natum ex Maria Virgine!*<sup>16</sup> Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary! *Caro Christi, caro Mariae.*<sup>17</sup> The flesh of Christ which we receive in the Eucharist is truly the flesh which he received from Mary.<sup>18</sup> Thus the Holy Father reasons in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* §55:

In a certain sense Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God’s Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the 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.

As a result, there is a profound analogy between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the *Amen* which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived “through the Holy Spirit” was “the Son of God” (Lk. 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin’s faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine.<sup>19</sup>

In an even more evocative and poetic way, the Holy Father drew out the implications of this reality in a marvelous Angelus address which he gave on the Feast

<sup>15</sup> *Inseg* XVI/1 (1993) 1508-1509 [ORE 1295:8].

<sup>16</sup> For the text of this Eucharistic hymn, cf. Matthew Britt, O.S.B., *The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal* (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc, 1948) 191-192. On its origin, cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 1:1124.

<sup>17</sup> In Domenico Casagrande’s *Enchiridion Marianum Biblicum Patristicum* (Rome: «Cor Unum», 1974) there are a large number of entries under this phrase.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Crocetti, 46; René Laurentin “L’Eucaristia e la Vergine,” in Mons. Antonio Piolanti (ed.), *Eucaristia: Il Mistero dell’Altare nel Pensiero e nella Vita della Chiesa* (Rome: Desclée & C., 1957) 632-634.

<sup>19</sup> *Inseg* XXVI/1 (2003) 506-507 [ORE 1790:IX].

of Corpus Christi, June 5, 1983 and which I consider a real gem of Eucharistic-Marian spirituality:

*“Ave, verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine”!*

Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary!

On the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, our grateful thanks is raised to the Father, who has given us the Divine Word, the living Bread come down from heaven, and our thanks is joyfully raised to the Virgin, who offered the Lord his innocent Flesh and his precious Blood which we receive at the altar. “Ave, verum Corpus”: true Body, truly conceived through the work of the Holy Spirit, borne in the womb with ineffable love (Preface II of Advent), born for us of the Virgin Mary: “natum de Maria Virgine”.

That divine Body and Blood, which after the consecration is present on the altar, is offered to the Father, and becomes Communion of love for everyone, by consolidating us in the unity of the Spirit in order to found the Church, preserves its maternal origin from Mary. She prepared that Body and Blood before offering them to the Word as a gift from the whole human family that he might be clothed in them in becoming our Redeemer, High Priest and Victim.

At the root of the Eucharist, therefore, there is the virginal and maternal life of Mary, her overflowing experience of God, her journey of faith and love, which through the work of the Holy Spirit made her flesh a temple and her heart an altar: because she conceived not according to nature, but through faith, with a free and conscious act: an act of obedience. And if the Body that we eat and the Blood that we drink is the inestimable gift of the Risen Lord, to us travellers, it still has in itself, as fragrant Bread, the taste and aroma of the Virgin Mother.<sup>20</sup>

In the passage of this Angelus address just cited, the emphasis is clearly on Mary’s collaboration in the Incarnation. The Pope points out that just as we should thank the Father for the gift of the Divine Word, the living Bread come down from heaven, so also we should thank the Virgin “who offered the Lord his innocent Flesh and his precious Blood which we receive at the altar”. He then reinforces this reason for our gratitude to Mary by stating that the Body and Blood of Christ

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<sup>20</sup> *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1446-1447 [ORE 788:2].

which we receive in the Eucharist “preserves its maternal origin from Mary”. By taking on our human nature from her, the Holy Father points out, Jesus became the perfect Mediator between God and man and therefore our High Priest as well as the perfect victim. This is another datum profoundly imbedded in the great tradition.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in the concrete, the Incarnation can never be separated from its goal, the Redemption. By virtue of supplying the matter for the sacrifice, Mary is already related to the Redemption, a concept beautifully developed in St. Pius X’s great Marian Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*.<sup>22</sup>

What I believe to be a particularly evocative contribution to the discourse on the link between Mary and the Eucharist made by John Paul II is the graceful assertion that “At the root of the Eucharist, therefore, there is the virginal and maternal life of Mary” [*Alla radice dell’Eucaristia c’è dunque la vita verginale e materna di Maria*] and that, thus, as the food for pilgrims, the Eucharist “still has in itself, as fragrant Bread, the taste and aroma of the Virgin Mother” [*esso porta ancora in sé, come Pane fragrante, il sapore e il profumo della Vergine Madre*].

## V. Mary’s Involvement in the Offering of the Sacrifice of the Cross

What we have been considering up to now has served as prelude to another profound truth of faith. Let us now return to the next section of that truly remarkable Angelus address of Corpus Christi 1983:

“*Vere passum, immolatum in Cruce pro homine*”. That Body truly suffered and was immolated on the Cross for man.

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; *Marialis Cultus*, 20): she offered him and she offered herself to the Father.<sup>23</sup>

In an eminently succinct way and with absolute theological precision John Paul II at once restated very clearly the truth of Mary’s active participation in the work

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Totus Tuus* 193-199.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ASS* 36 (1903-1904) 452-453 [*OL* #229-231].

<sup>23</sup> *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1447 [*ORE* 788:2].

of our redemption as presented in *Lumen Gentium* §56-58 and 61 and the papal magisterium while also advancing his own unparalleled teaching on Mary's presence in the Mass. Let us analyze the components of this very synthetic presentation.

1. The Pope summarizes even more incisively what he had already said above: Jesus was “born of the Virgin to be a pure, holy and immaculate oblation” [*Nato dalla Vergine per essere oblazione pura, santa e immacolata*]. Not only does this statement imply the salvific purpose of the Incarnation, but it also implies Mary's Immaculate Conception and, more remotely, the virginal conception and the virginal birth of Christ – all of this so that Christ could be for us the pure victim, the holy victim, the immaculate victim [*hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam*] as he is correctly described in the original Latin of the Roman Canon, poorly rendered in the present English translation as “this holy and perfect sacrifice”.

2. Next, with explicit reference to the teaching on Marian coredeemption in *Lumen Gentium* §58 and in Paul VI's *Marialis Cultus* §20, he declares that Mary offered Christ to the Father [*lo offrì ... al Padre*]. While the principal and primary offering to the Father was that made by Christ himself, the Church's magisterium is also very clear that Mary also offered him to the Father: the “New Eve” consciously and deliberately offered the “New Adam” to the Father for the redemption of the world. Here are two instances of this teaching by previous Popes.

Pope Benedict XV, in his Letter *Inter Sodalicia* of May 22, 1918, speaking of Our Lady's presence on Calvary (Jn. 19:25-27) which he says was “not without divine design”<sup>24</sup> stated that

Mary suffered and, as it were, nearly died with her suffering Son; for the salvation of mankind she renounced her mother's rights and, as far as it depended on her, offered her Son to placate divine justice; so we may well say that she with Christ redeemed mankind [*Scilicet ita cum Filio patiente et moriente passa est et pæne commortua, sic materna in Filium jura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandaque Dei justitiæ, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse*].<sup>25</sup>

Lest anyone think that Benedict is speaking here in hyperbolic idiom, let it be noted that his language is carefully measured. He says that Mary “offered her Son to placate divine justice to the extent that it pertained to her to do so” – *quantum ad*

<sup>24</sup> The phrase *non sine divino consilio* is used both in Benedict XV's *Inter Sodalicia* [*Acta Apostolica Sedis* hereafter cited as *AAS* 10 (1918) 182; *OL* #267] and in §58 of *Lumen Gentium* to describe Mary's position beneath the Cross of Jesus as specifically willed by God. While the verbal borrowing of this terminology is indisputable, the conciliar document makes no reference to it.

<sup>25</sup> *AAS* 10 (1918) 181-182 [*OL* #267] emphasis my own.

*se pertinebat*. Hence her offering, while it is not on the same level as that of her divine Son, is nonetheless united with that of Jesus.

The Servant of God Pius XII also gave this teaching classic expression in his Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* of June 29, 1943:

She [Mary] it was who, immune from all sin, personal or inherited, and ever most closely united with her Son, *offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father together with the holocaust of her maternal rights and motherly love*, like a new Eve, for all the children of Adam contaminated through this unhappy fall ... [*Ipsa fuit, qua vel propria, vel hereditaria labis expers, arctissime semper cum Filio suo coniuncta, eundem in Golgotha, una cum maternorum iurium maternique amoris sui holocausto, nova veluti Eva, pro omnibus Adæ filiis, miserando eius lapsu foedatis, Æterno Patri obtulit*].<sup>26</sup>

I would like to summarize what I have just presented with the marvelously concise comments which Pope John Paul II made on Saint Joseph's Day in 1995 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Castelpetroso:

Dear brothers and sisters, may you also offer the Lord your daily joys and labors in communion with Christ and through the intercession of his Mother venerated here as *she offers to the Father the Son who sacrificed himself for our salvation* [*Carissimi Fratelli e Sorelle, sappiate anche voi offrire al Signore le gioie e le fatiche quotidiane, in comunione con Cristo e per intercessione della Madre sua, qui venerata mentre presenta al Padre il Figlio immolato per la nostra salvezza*].<sup>27</sup>

Note here the Pope's theological precision: he speaks of Mary offering the Son to the Father, but further qualifies the Son as he "who sacrificed himself for our salvation". Mary's offering of Christ always implies first his own offering of himself.

3. Now let us consider the next part of the assertion which John Paul II made in the Angelus address of June 5, 1983, namely that "Mary offered herself to the Father" [*si offrì al Padre*]. We might say that this, too, is contained implicitly in Mary's *fiat* spoken on the momentous day of the Annunciation. The "yes" which came from her heart on Golgotha in offering her Son to the Father to satisfy for the sins of the world cannot really be separated from her total abandonment to the Father's will which is the offering of herself. Indeed, it is necessary to distinguish

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<sup>26</sup> *AAS* 35 (1943) 247-248 [OL #383] emphasis my own. Pius XII quoted this text again in his Encyclical Letter *Ad Cæli Reginam* of October 11, 1954, *AAS* 46 (1954) 635 [OL #705].

<sup>27</sup> *Inseg* XVIII/1 (1995) 542 [ORE 1384:3] emphasis my own.

between Mary's offering of her Son and her offering of herself to the Father – and this distinction is certainly made by the magisterium because it involves the offering of two distinct persons, one divine and one human. Nonetheless, these two offerings, while not on the same level, were simultaneous and united.

We have already weighed the famous text of Benedict XV's *Inter Sodalicia* from the viewpoint of Mary's offering of Christ, now let us examine that text from the perspective of Mary's self-offering and of her "paying the price of mankind's redemption" along with Christ.

*Mary suffered and, as it were, nearly died with her suffering Son; for the salvation of mankind she renounced her mother's rights and, as far as it depended on her, offered her Son to placate divine justice; so we may well say that she with Christ redeemed mankind [Scilicet ita cum Filio patiente et moriente passa est et pane commortua, sic materna in Filium jura pro hominum salute abdicavit placandæque Dei justitiæ, quantum ad se pertinebat, Filium immolavit, ut dici merito queat, Ipsam cum Christo humanum genus redemisse].*<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that this statement takes nothing away from the fact that Jesus' merits were all-sufficient or that Mary, as a human creature, could never make an offering that would equal that of her divine Son. Rather what Benedict XV does is to underscore Mary's active participation by her own suffering in the redemption wrought on Calvary. As if by way of commentary, two years later, in his homily at the canonization of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, he said that "the sufferings of Jesus cannot be separated from the sorrows of Mary".<sup>29</sup> True, they can be logically distinguished, yet they are indissolubly united.

The union of Jesus' and Mary's sufferings for our salvation is brought out beautifully by the Servant of God Pius XII in his great Sacred Heart Encyclical of May 15, 1956, *Haurietis Aquas*:

*By the will of God, the most Blessed Virgin Mary was inseparably joined with Christ in accomplishing the work of man's redemption, so that our salvation flows from the love of Jesus Christ and His sufferings intimately united with the love and sorrows of His Mother [Cum enim ex Dei voluntate in humanæ Redemptionis peragendo opere Beatissima Virgo Maria cum Christo fuerit indivulse coniuncta, adeo ut ex Iesu Christi*

<sup>28</sup> *AAS* 10 (1918) 182 [OL #267] emphasis my own.

<sup>29</sup> *AAS* 12 (1920) 224 [Bro. Richard Zehnle, S.M. (trans.) "Marian Doctrine of Benedict XV," *Marian Reprint* (Marian Library, University of Dayton) No. 70:9].

*caritate eiusque cruciatibus cum amore doloribusque ipsius Matris intime consociatis sit nostra salus projecta*].<sup>30</sup>

In this classic passage every word is carefully weighed and measured in order to make a declaration on the redemption and Mary's role in it which remains a classic for its clarity and precision. Pius professes that "our salvation flows from the love of Jesus Christ and His sufferings" [*ex Iesu Christi caritate eiusque cruciatibus*] which is "intimately united with the love and sorrows of His Mother" [*cum amore doloribusque ipsius Matris intime consociatis*]. The Latin preposition *ex* indicates Jesus as the source of our redemption while three other Latin words, *cum* and *intime consociatis* indicate Mary's inseparability from the source. Finally, let us note Pius' insistence on the fact that this union of Jesus with Mary for our salvation has been ordained "by the will of God" [*ex Dei voluntate*].

While it would be possible to quote numerous other texts from the papal magisterium in support of Mary's sacrifice of herself in union with Jesus for our salvation, I wish to cite just one more, which comes from Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* of February 11, 1984 and which can also serve as a marvelous recapitulation of his magisterium and that of his predecessors on this point:

It is especially consoling to note – and also accurate in accordance with the Gospel and history – that at the side of Christ, in the first and most exalted place, there is always His Mother through the exemplary testimony that she bears *by her whole life* to this particular Gospel of suffering. *In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith but also a contribution to the Redemption of all. ... It was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.* Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the cross together with the beloved disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son [*Est imprimis solacii causa – res sane Evangelio et historia comprobata – quod iuxta Christum, loco primario et probe significato, sancta eius Mater semper adest ad dandum egregium testimonium, quod tota vita sua de hoc singulari doloris perhibet. Permulta et vehementes passionibus confluerunt in talem nexum et colligationem, ut non solum fidem eius inconcussam comprobarent, verum etiam ad redemptionem omnium conferrunt ... dolores Beatae Mariae*

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<sup>30</sup> *AAS* 48 (1956) 352 [OL #778] emphasis my own.

*Virginis in Calvariae loco ad fastigium pervenerunt, cuius altitudo mente humana vix fingi quidem potest, sed certe arcana fuit et supernaturali ratione fecunda pro universalis redemptione. Ascensus ille in Calvariae locum, illud «stare» inxtra Crucem una cum discipulo praeter ceteris dilecto, communicatio prorsus peculiaris fuerunt mortis redemptricis Filii».*<sup>31</sup>

Another citation from *Salvifici Doloris* may help to provide further context for the truths which underlie this mystery of Mary's coredemptive suffering:

The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world's Redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it [*Christi passio bonum redemptionis mundi effecit, quod quidem in se ipso inexhaustum est et infinitum neque ei quidquam ab ullo homine addi potest*].<sup>32</sup>

But at the same time "Mary's suffering [on Calvary], beside the suffering of Jesus ... was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world." Thus the Pope strikes that careful balance which is always a hallmark of Catholic truth: he upholds the principle that the sufferings of Christ were all-sufficient for the salvation of the world, while maintaining that Mary's sacrifice was nonetheless "a contribution to the Redemption of all".

## VI. Mary's Involvement in the Offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass

Now let us listen to the final part of that memorable Angelus address of *Corpus Christi* 1983:

Every Eucharist is a memorial of that Sacrifice and that Passover that restored life to the world; every Mass puts us in intimate communion with her, the Mother, whose sacrifice "becomes present" just as the Sacrifice of her Son "becomes present" at the words of consecration of the bread and wine pronounced by the priest.<sup>33</sup>

It is precisely here in the third part of this brief but theologically dense address that John Paul II broke new ground in applying the received teaching on Marian coredemption to the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I have found no similar statement in the magisterium of his predecessors. His thesis is precisely that Mary's sacrifice

<sup>31</sup> *Inseg* VII/1 (1984) 308-309 [St. Paul Editions 40-41] except for "by her whole life," emphasis my own.

<sup>32</sup> *Inseg* VII/1 (1984) 307 [St. Paul Editions 37-38].

<sup>33</sup> *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1447 [ORE 788:2].



becomes present in the Mass just as her Son's sacrifice becomes present. This is true above all precisely because Jesus *is* Mary's sacrifice; she offered him in sacrifice on Calvary to the Father for us. Secondly, this is also true because Mary's sacrifice of herself is indissolubly united to the sacrifice of Jesus. Certainly Mary's sacrifice is always ancillary, subordinate to and dependent on his, but at the same time it is also inextricably united to his sacrifice of himself. Hence the Pope used his Message of August 15, 1996 to the 19th International Marian Congress, held in Częstochowa, Poland from August 24–26, 1996, in order to underscore Mary's presence in the sacrifice of Calvary and her presence in the sacrifice of the Mass:

Every Holy Mass makes present in an unbloody manner that unique and perfect sacrifice, offered by Christ on the tree of the Cross, in which Mary participated, joined in spirit with her suffering Son, lovingly consenting to his sacrifice and offering her own sorrow to the Father (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 58). Therefore when we celebrate the Eucharist, the memorial of Christ's pass-over, the memory of his Mother's suffering is also made alive and present, this Mother who, as an unsurpassable model, teaches the faithful to unite themselves more intimately to the sacrifice of her Son, the one Redeemer. Through spiritual communion with the sorrowful Mother of God, believers share in a special way in the paschal mystery and are opened to this extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit which produces a supernatural joy because of communion with the glorious Christ, on the example of the joy granted to Mary in the glory of heaven, as the first person to share in the fruits of the Redemption.<sup>34</sup>

Both of these marvelous texts speak clearly of Mary's presence in the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, but the second goes even farther in presenting her "as an unsurpassable model" [*come insuperabile modello*] for the faithful in uniting "themselves more intimately to the sacrifice of her Son" [*ad unirsi più intimamente al sacrificio del Figlio*]. Even more, in this second text the Pope passes from speaking of Our Lady's role as Coredemptrix to her role as Mediatrix i.e., her function in "opening up the faithful" to the extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit in producing supernatural joy in them because of their communion with the glorious Christ – and this "on the example of the joy granted to Mary in the glory of heaven, as the

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<sup>34</sup> OR 6 settembre 1996, 4 [ORE 1462:2]. Unfortunately, for some strange reason the original Italian text is not found in the *Insegnamenti*, but it was published in the daily edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* on the date indicated and also in *Miles Immaculatae* 32:2 (Luglio/Dicembre 1996) 444-446.

first person to share in the fruits of the Redemption”. I leave it to others to analyze the type of Mary’s mediatorial causality which the Pope is describing here.<sup>35</sup> (There is no little irony in the fact that the second of these magnificent texts was intended for a gathering of mariologists in Częstochowa some of whose leading participants drew up a document highly critical of the traditional doctrine on Marian coredeemtion and strongly opposed to the definition of Mary as Coredeptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate!<sup>36</sup> One wonders if this could have had anything to do with the omission of this highly significant text from the *Insegnamenti*.)

These two extraordinary texts are not the only instances of Pope John Paul II’s teaching on Mary’s presence in the Mass. He showed remarkable consistency on this matter to the point that I believe it can be recognized as part of his ordinary magisterium on the basis of the frequency with which he proposed this doctrine [*frequenti propositione eiusdem doctrina*].<sup>37</sup> I offer these further enlightening confirmations of this teaching.

On August 25, 2001, he introduced the Mass he was celebrating for Polish pilgrims in this way:

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman ...” (Gal. 4:4). This saving mystery, in which God has assigned to the woman Mary of Nazareth, a role that cannot be replaced, is continually made present in the Eucharist. When we celebrate the Holy Mass, the Mother of the Son of God is in our midst and introduces us to the mystery of His redemptive sacrifice. Thus, she is the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from this sacrifice to the Church and to all the faithful.<sup>38</sup>

We notice here not only the accentuation on Mary’s presence in the Mass but also, as was the case in the Message to the Marian Congress of August 15, 1996, the further emphasis on Mary as “the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from this sacrifice to the Church and to all the faithful”. Although in itself a brief statement which Marian minimalists will readily dismiss as “marginal and therefore devoid of doctri-

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. John A. Schug, O.F.M.Cap., *Mary, Mother* (Springfield, MA: St. Francis Chapel Press, 1991) 121-199.

<sup>36</sup> OR 4 giugno 1997, 10 [ORE 1494:12].

<sup>37</sup> *Lumen Gentium* §25. Cf. *Totus Tuus* 266-269.

<sup>38</sup> *Inseg* XXIV/2 (2001) 192 [ORE 1707:1]. For the second part of the text beginning with “When we celebrate ...”, I have followed the English translation from the Polish given in ORE 1776:V where it was quoted in the Instruction by the Congregation for the Clergy of August 4, 2002, “The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community”, §13.

nal weight”<sup>39</sup>, I submit that this statement, along with that of August 15, 1996, is of great importance as verifying and continuing in the line of the magisterium of Leo XIII and St. Pius X on Mary as Mediatrix of all graces and it further takes a specific position with regard to Our Lady’s mediation of the grace of the sacraments.<sup>40</sup> Again on November 23, 2001 in his address to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Clergy the Pope said:

I recommend to each one to turn, in the daily exercise of pastoral care, to the maternal help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, seeking to live in profound communion with Her. In the ministerial priesthood, as I wrote in the *Letter to Priests, on the occasion of Holy Thursday 1979*, “there is the wonderful and penetrating dimension of nearness to the Mother of Christ” (n. 11). When we celebrate Holy Mass, dear Brother priests, the Mother of the Redeemer is beside us. She introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son. “*Ad Jesum per Mariam*”: may this be our daily programme of spiritual and pastoral life!<sup>41</sup>

On this occasion the Pope was speaking to priests in a manner which seems reminiscent of Padre Pio.<sup>42</sup> So convinced is he that one wonders if he was speaking from personal experience. Yet again he speaks of Our Lady’s mediatorial role: it is she who “introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son” [*che ci introduce nel mistero dell’offerta redentrice del suo divino Figlio*].

Certainly the most solemn of his statements about Mary’s presence in the celebration of the Eucharist occurs in §57 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

“Do this in remembrance of me” (Lk. 22:19). 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).

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<sup>39</sup> *Documenti pontifici secondari, e quindi senza peso dottrinale* is the phrase which occurs in the unsigned commentary on the Declaration of the Theological Commission of the Czestochowa Mariological Congress in OR 4 giugno 1997, 10 [ORE 1497:10].

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Joaquín Ferrer Arellano, “Marian Coredeemption and Sacramental Mediation,” in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross: III Maria, Mater Unitatis* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2003) 70-126.

<sup>41</sup> *Inseg* XXIV/2 (2001) 944-945 [ORE 1721:2].

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Padre Pio’s letter of 1 May 1912 to Padre Agostino wherein he speaks of Our Lady accompanying him to the altar, Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, *Letters I* (San Giovanni Rotondo, 1980) 312.

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. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of East and West [*In Eucharistia vivere memoriam mortis Christi requirit etiam ut hoc donum continenter excipiat. Significat sumere nobiscum – exemplum Ioannis secuti – illam quæ identidem uti Mater nobis datur. Significat eodem tempore munus exsequi se Christo conformandi, sive scholam Matris frequentando sive comitatum eius acceptando. Maria præsens est, cum Ecclesia et uti Mater Ecclesiæ, in singulis nostris celebrationibus eucharisticis. Sicut Ecclesia et Eucharistia indivisibile continent binomium, ita quoque dicendum est de binomio Maria et Eucharistia. Idcirco commemoratio quoque Mariæ in eucharistica Celebratione, ab antiquè inde aetate, unanimes est in Ecclesiis tam Orientalibus quem Occidentalibus*].<sup>43</sup>

With regard to this passage, it may be said, once again, without any exaggeration that John Paul II broke new ground in making explicit the link between Mary and the Mass. Clearly there is no Pope who ever commented more frequently or with greater profundity on the text of John 19:25-27.<sup>44</sup> He found in it the basis for Mary's *kenosis*<sup>45</sup>, Marian coredemption<sup>46</sup>, Mary's spiritual maternity<sup>47</sup>, her motherhood of the Church<sup>48</sup>, Marian devotion<sup>49</sup>, Marian consecration and entrustment<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> *Inseg* XXVI/1 (2003) 508 [ORE 1790:IX-X].

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins (ed.), *TOTUS TUUS. Il Magistero Mariano di Giovanni Paolo II* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2006) 25-26 and *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Redemptoris Mater* §18.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Arthur Burton Calkins, "Pope John Paul II's Teaching on Marian Coredemption" in Mark I. Miravalle, S.T.D., (ed.), *Mary Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate, Theological Foundations II: Papal, Pneumatological, Ecumenical* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing Company, 1997) 134-144; "Pope John Paul II's Ordinary Magisterium on Marian Coredemption: Consistent Teaching and More Recent Perspectives" in *Mary at the Foot of the Cross – II: Acts of the Second International Symposium on Marian Coredemption* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2002) 21-27.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Totus Tuus* 208-213.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Redemptor Hominis* §22; *Redemptoris Mater* §47.

Now situating this entrusting of John to Mary and Mary to John within the Eucharistic context of the sacrifice of Jesus anticipated on the first Holy Thursday and consummated on the first Good Friday, he teaches that

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. [*In «memoria» Calvaria præsens est id quod in passione et in morte sua Christus explevit. Quare id non deest quod Christus explevit etiam erga Matrem pro nobis. Ipsi enim tradens discipulum prædilectum, et in eo tradi unumquemque nostrum: «Ecce filius tuus!». Pariter dicit quoque unicuique nostrum: «Ecce mater tua!».*

*In Eucharistia vivere memoriam mortis Christi requirit etiam ut hoc donum continenter excipiatur.*

According to Pope John Paul II, then, our living the total experience of the Eucharistic memorial of Christ’s death effectively requires that we accept Mary as Mother and welcome her into our lives.<sup>51</sup> From this datum he underscores once again that “Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist” [*Maria præsens est, cum Ecclesia et uti Mater Ecclesiæ, in singulis nostris celebrationibus eucharisticis.*]

Finally, as a way of summarizing the Pope’s teaching on this matter, we have this brief statement in §14 of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis* of October 16, 2003:

The Bishop’s solid Marian devotion will be constantly related to the liturgy, where the Blessed Virgin is particularly present in the celebration of the mysteries of salvation and serves as a model of docility and prayer, of spiritual oblation and motherhood for the whole Church [*Solida marialis Episcopi devotio continenter ad sacram Liturgiam referetur, ubi in salutis mysteriis celebrandis peculiarem præsentes*

<sup>49</sup> Cf. his audiences of May 11, 1983; November 23, 1988; April 23, 1997; May 7, 1997.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Totus Tuus* 238-248.

<sup>51</sup> On the concept of receiving/welcoming Mary, cf. *Totus Tuus* 152-153, 240-248.

*tiam obtinet Virgo ipsaque universae Ecclesiae precandi, audiendi, offerendi itemque spiritalis maternitatis excimium est exemplar].<sup>52</sup>*

## VII. Mary as Exemplar for the Participation of the Faithful at Mass

As we have just seen, the Holy Father's insistence on Mary's presence in the Mass, her union with the offering of Jesus to the Father in sacrifice, is the perfect model for all of the faithful at Mass. Here is how he put it in his general audience address of September 10, 1997:

Mary was a witness to the historical unfolding of the saving events, which culminated in the Redeemer's Death and Resurrection, and she kept "all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19).

She was not merely present at the individual events, but sought to grasp their deep meaning, adhering with all her soul to what was being mysteriously accomplished in them.

Mary appears therefore as the supreme model of personal participation in the divine mysteries. She guides the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event, by encouraging the faithful to desire an intimate, personal relationship with Christ in order to cooperate with the gift of their own life in the salvation of all [*Maria appare, pertanto, come supremo modello di partecipazione personale ai divini misteri. Ella guida la Chiesa nella meditazione del mistero celebrato e nella partecipazione all'evento di salvezza, promuovendo nei fedeli il desiderio di un intimo coinvolgimento personale con Cristo per cooperare con il dono della propria vita alla salvezza universale*]. ...

The Blessed Virgin also represents the Church's model for generously participating in sacrifice.

In presenting Jesus in the temple and, especially, at the foot of the Cross, Mary completes the gift of herself which associates her as Mother with the suffering and trials of her Son. Thus in daily life as in the Eucharistic celebration, the "Virgin presenting offerings" (*Marialis cultus*, n. 20) encourages Christians to "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt.

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<sup>52</sup> *Inseg* XXVI/2 (2003) 416 [ORE 1815:V].

2:5) [La vergine costituisce, altresì, per la Chiesa il modello nella partecipazione generosa al sacrificio.

*Nella presentazione di Gesù al tempio e, soprattutto, ai piedi della croce, Maria compie il dono di sé che l'associa quale Madre alla sofferenza ed alle prove del Figlio. Così nella vita quotidiana come nella Celebrazione eucaristica la «Vergine offerente» incoraggia i cristiani ad «offrire sacrifici spirituali graditi a Dio, per mezzo di Gesù Cristo».*<sup>53</sup>

Here the Holy Father indicates Mary's exemplary role in two ways: she serves as guide for "the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event" and serves as "the Church's model for generously participating in sacrifice". In these two points, I believe, the Holy Father provided the most authentic key to interpreting the teaching in §41 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* on the active participation [*actuosa participatio*] of the faithful in the Eucharist and in §48 of the same dogmatic constitution on the offering of themselves in union with the immaculate victim offered through the hands of the priest [*immaculatam hostiam, non tantum per sacerdotis manus, sed etiam una cum ipso offerentes, seipsos offerre discant*].

In §86 of his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* of May 31, 1998, he further illustrates Mary's role:

Without in any way detracting from the centrality of Christ and his Spirit, Mary is always present in the Church's Sunday. It is the mystery of Christ itself which demands this: indeed, how could she who is *Mater Domini* and *Mater Ecclesiae* fail to be uniquely present on the day which is both *dies Domini* and *dies Ecclesiae*?

As they listen to the word proclaimed in the Sunday assembly, the faithful look to the Virgin Mary, learning from her to keep it and ponder it in their hearts (cf. Lk. 2:19). With Mary, they learn to stand at the foot of the Cross, offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives. With Mary, they experience the joy of the Resurrection, making their own the words of the Magnificat which extol the inexhaustible gift of divine mercy in the inexorable flow of time: "His mercy is from age to age upon those who fear him" (Lk. 1:50). From Sunday to Sunday, the pilgrim people follow in the footsteps of Mary, and her maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the

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<sup>53</sup> *Inseg* XX/2 (1997) 296, 297 [ORE 1508:7].

Most Holy Trinity [*Nil sane ipsa præcipuis Christi eiusque Spiritus officiis detrahens adest in omni Dominica Ecclesia. Hoc ipsum Christi mysterium deponit: quomodo enim Illa, quæ Mater Domini est atque Mater Ecclesiæ, non peculiari titulo adesse posset eo ipso die qui simul et dies Domini est et dies Ecclesiæ?*

*Fideles qui in dominicali congressione proclamatum audiunt Verbum Virginem Mariam respiciunt at ea discentes illud idem custodire et suo ponderare in corde. Cum Maria sub cruce consistere discunt, ut Patri Christi sacrificium offerant suæque vitæ donum cum eo consociant. Gaudium resurrectionis cum Maria experiuntur, suas faciunt eius voces Magnificat quæ inexhaustum divinæ misericordiæ donum decantant perpetuo in temporis fluxu itinere: «Et miseridocrida eius in progenies et progenies timentibus eum». Ex Dominica in dominicam diem Mariæ vestigia peregrinans premit populus, atque ius maternæ preces vehementem insigniter et efficacem reddunt precationem illam, quam ad sanctissimam Trinitatem tollit Ecclesia».<sup>54</sup>*

I would underscore four points here. (1) With regard to the Liturgy of the Word, Mary is presented as the exemplar, the peerless “ponderer of the Word in her heart”. (2) With regard to the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Mary teaches the faithful how “to stand at the foot of the Cross, offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives”. We have already seen this brought out in the previous citation. (3) The third point is the linking of the sacrifice of the Cross and the Resurrection as the “Paschal Mystery”. Mary’s experience of the joy of the Resurrection makes her the model singer of the Magnificat, in thanksgiving for the “great things” which the Lord accomplishes in us through the Eucharist, a thought which the Pope would develop further in §58 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. (4) The final point is that the Holy Father links Mary’s presence in the Eucharist with her mediatorial role of intercession as Advocate on behalf of her children: “her maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the Most Holy Trinity” [*ius maternæ preces vehementem insigniter et efficacem reddunt precationem illam, quam ad sanctissimam Trinitatem tollit Ecclesia*].

## VIII. Summary of John Paul II’s Teaching on Mary and the Eucharist

Let us review some of the most salient features of the teaching of Pope John Paul II on the bond between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist.

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<sup>54</sup> *Inseg* XXI/1 (1998) 1188-1189 [ORE 1549:XI].



1. In *Redemptoris Mater* §44 he stated that Mary's "motherhood is particularly noted and experienced by the Christian people at the *Sacred Banquet*". In that same paragraph he declared that "Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist".

2. The body and blood of Christ had its only human source in the body and blood of Mary: the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist is sacramentally the flesh he assumed from the Virgin Mary. The Eucharist, then, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation and thus evokes Mary's presence.

3. To use the Pope's own words: "At the root of the Eucharist, therefore, there is the virginal and maternal life of Mary. As fragrant Bread, the Eucharist has the taste and aroma of the Virgin Mother."

4. Jesus was born of the Virgin to be a pure oblation, pleasing to the Father.

5. On Calvary Mary offered Jesus to the Father and she offered herself to the Father in union with him. This is to state the essence of what has come to be referred to as the doctrine of Marian coredemption.

6. On Calvary Mary's suffering reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human perspective but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.

7. Mary's sacrifice "becomes present" just as the Sacrifice of her Son "becomes present" at the words of consecration of the bread and wine pronounced by the priest. Here it must be specified that one is not speaking of the transubstantiation which takes place in the sacred species, but of a mystical presence of Our Lady which accompanies the sacrifice of Christ.

8. Mary introduces us into the mystery of the redemptive offering of her divine Son.

9. Mary is "in our midst", "beside us", "particularly present" in our celebration of the Eucharist. The particular mode of this presence remains to be further specified.

10. Nonetheless, Mary's presence in the celebration of the Eucharist is active, as it was on Calvary. But in the Mass not only does she renew her sacrifice, but she also is the mediatrix of all the grace flowing from the sacrifice of the Mass to the Church and to all the faithful.

11. Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist also means continually receiving the gift of his Mother, of being entrusted to her anew.

12. Mary serves as guide for the Church in meditating on the mystery celebrated and in participating in the saving event and serves as the Church's model for generously participating in sacrifice and, in a particular way, for offering to the Father the sacrifice of Christ and joining to it the offering of their own lives.

13. Our Lady's maternal intercession gives special power and fervour to the prayer which rises from the Church to the Most Holy Trinity.

## **IX. By Way of Conclusion**

I believe that Pope 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 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.

It seems that up to now very few are aware of this marvelous Eucharistic-Marian patrimony of Pope John Paul II. Beyond a few generic references to Mary as "the Woman of the Eucharist", it seems to be almost totally unknown. What I have presented here is only an initial exposition of this extraordinarily rich doctrine which needs to be analyzed in depth by theologians and studied by the faithful. Even more, it needs to be appropriated and lived. We may be sure that it will be contested in certain circles, but the darkness will not overcome it (cf. Jn. 1:5) because it is a teaching which is especially needed in our day. Thus it was that the Lord providentially arranged that John Paul II should give voice to it. This doctrine is above all a testimony to Our Lady's role in the work of our redemption as Coredeptrix and Mediatrix of all graces, a function which she continues to fulfill in an altogether unique way in the Eucharistic Mystery, as our late Holy Father had the grace to underscore with such consistency and at the same time constantly unveiling new facets of the relationship between Mary and the Eucharist. Our Lady's role in the celebration of the Eucharist and in our lives needs to be proclaimed, celebrated and lived. The more that we do so, the more that the entire Church does so, the more the entire world will be transformed by the Eucharist Mystery.