

Our Lady's Most Intimate Relation with the Blessed Trinity  
Conference Lincoln  
December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1998

I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel. [Gen. 3:17]

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel. [Isaiah7:15]

From the very beginning, before God created the heavens and the earth, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity beheld in His Heart the vision of His Mother. With an infinite love, He waited for the day in which He could bestow on her existence and life. So profound is His love for her, that He could not wait to tell all of mankind of her coming. Immediately after Adam and Eve had fallen, He predicted her coming in the proto-evangelium, i.e. the promising of the coming of the Messiah from a woman who would be Satan's constant enemy. Throughout the Old Testament, there are little indications that God was preparing the world for the coming of a creature who would be the pinnacle of His creation in the supernatural order. While this creature being of humble nature, would, nevertheless, rule the heavens and the earth. So great is God's love for Our Lady, that He bestowed on her a holy virginity and by a singular miracle so deigned that she would not lose that virginity even though should would bare a Son.

In the Cloisters in New York, there exists a set of tapestries which depicts a Unicorn which represents the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who no one could tame. So men in desperation, called upon the aid of a virgin who would coax the Unicorn into being captured. This depiction in these tapestries tells us of how man could not persuade Our Lord to become man until the Blessed Virgin was born. God so loved Our Lady that in seeing her grace, God decided that finally there was creature that was a fitting dwelling for Him. He looked upon her with such love for here was a creature that never possessed any guile or evil will; who never once violated even the slightest of His commandments or precepts; who exhibited such reverence and piety in His eyes that He was moved to make her His tabernacle.

When we reflect upon how much God loved Our Lady, we begin to see the basis for the most intimate relationship He chose to have with her. When she was immaculately conceived, God chose

to preserve Our Lady from any stain of sin. While He allowed her to suffer the physical effects of Original Sin, never once did she suffer the moral effects of Original Sin. She never once committed even a venial sin; she never once harbored even the slightest thought against charity or purity; she never once had a single inordinate desire or inclination. Perfection and total beauty were her companions all the days of her life. Since sanctifying grace is the created participation in divine nature and since Our Lady was full of grace, it is clear that Our Lord wished to bestow on her “every grace and blessing.” God Who is Goodness Itself so loved Our Lady that He wished that she should be like Him and so He spared her not a single grace.

Throughout the course of her life, Our Lady was taught by St. Anne the precepts of Our Lord and how she burned with desire to keep them. Like the Psalmist, God’s commands and His Laws became the object of her meditation and joy. Throughout her life, God moved her to heights of contemplation and prayer unseen since the time of Adam and Eve; for she walked and talked in the presence of her Lord. Her life of prayer provided a most intimate life with her Lord until it came time for her marriage.

Our Lord chose a most just man, St. Joseph, to be the earthly spouse of Our Lady. But God’s intentions were far deeper than even St. Joseph initially knew. God so loved Our Lady that He Himself chose to be the heavenly Spouse of Our Lady. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Mary and asked her if she would bear the Son of God, God was, in effect, asking her to be His Spouse. Our Lady at first did not fully grasp that this meant that God Himself would be the Father of the Child she would bear and, consequently, the Holy Ghost and Our Lady would be bound in a mystical marriage. We read in St. John of the Cross that those who reach the highest levels of perfection are given in a mystical form of marriage in which God gives Himself to the person. This means that like all marriage, it can only end in death. But since God’s mystical marriage is to the soul of the person, once the person is mystically married to God, then the marriage will last forever.

In theology, we call this conservation in grace. It means that before the mystical marriage of Our Lady with God, she was only preserved in grace, i.e. kept from committing sin. But once she accepted the mystical marriage of Our Lord, then the Spouse of Our Lady, i.e. Holy Ghost, came to dwell with her. Just as those who marry in this life and cohabit together, so the Holy Ghost came to overshadow or live with Our Lady. It meant that just as in marriage we give bodily rights over

to our spouse, so too did the Holy Ghost accept absolute bodily rights over Our Lady. This is why He preserved her virginity. For her virginity was a sign that Our Lady's body was to be His alone; not only because it would be the tabernacle of Christ, but because only He had rights over her body. This meant that her virginity would never be compromised.

It also meant that Our Lady was entitled to the name of the Holy Ghost. It is the teaching of St. Maximilian Kolby that the reason Our Lady said at Lourdes to St. Bernadette "I am the Immaculate Conception" rather than "I was immaculately conceived": is because the real immaculate conception is the Holy Ghost. For within the life of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father and God the Son so loved each other, that like husband and wife, they spirated a Third Person. This "conception" if you will, within the Blessed Trinity is nothing else than the love the Second Person and the First Person of the Trinity have for each other. In other words, the Holy Ghost is Pure Love Itself and this Pure Love would become the Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. So much did God love Our Lady that He desired that she become the spouse of His Very Own Love. The Holy Ghost is then in the proper sense THE Immaculate Conception. But since Our Lady had become the Holy Ghost's mystical spouse, that meant she was entitled to His Name. The Immaculate Conception not only refers to the fact that Our Lady was conceived without Original Sin, it also refers to her new name as the spouse of the Holy Ghost. And what more would be appropriate, for the fact that she was conceived without Original Sin meant she was conceived in the state of grace and grace is nothing other than an indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the soul. So we see that she in whom the Holy Ghost took up His dwelling by grace should also be she to whom the Holy Ghost would be mystically married. Just as we engage in courtship before our marriages, so did the Holy Ghost dwell with Our Lady before His Mystical marriage with her through sanctifying grace. And just as in this world no greater union can two have than through marriage, so too can no one have a greater union with Our Lord than Our Lady to whom the first and greatest mystical marriage occurred.

Moreover, just as in any earthly marriage, children are the proper offspring of their love, so too when Our Lady was mystically married to the Holy Ghost did she bear offspring. But not just any offspring, the Offspring of God, i.e. Jesus Christ Who is fully God and fully man. When in earthly marriages the woman is with child, if her husband be a man of virtue, his joy and love of his wife increases for there is now a new bond, viz. their new offspring, so too, is it with Our Lady. For

once she became the mother of Our Lord, the Holy Ghost took even greater pleasure and joy in her. When a new bride is first married, her joy is very great and she thinks and reflects often of her new husband and the little favors he does for her gives her no end of joy. Our Lady, likewise, thought continually of God and the good things He had done to her; for the Magnificat of Our Lady is like the conversation of an earthly bride with a friend about her new husband. She recounts the little things her new husband has done for her and so too Our Lady recounts to Elizabeth the great things God has done to her. But notice that Elizabeth, moved by the Holy Ghost, declares that Our Lady is the mother of her Lord which is a sign that St. Elizabeth is declaring the mystical marriage between Our Lord and Our Lady; for she knows that for those of virtue as Our Lady is, are never with child out of wedlock and so Our Lady must be mystically married to Our Lord.

According to St. John of the Cross, mystical marriage occurs when the person has reached the highest level of prayer called the transforming union. The transforming union is a form of prayer in which the person has a non-stop mystical experience of God's presence. How fitting it is that Our Lady should, upon the mystical marriage with her Spouse the Holy Ghost, likewise experience this level of prayer. An earthly husband hates to leave his new wife and while working he longs to be home keeping his wife company. So too is it with God; for once He took Mary as His mystical bride, she remained in His company through the prayer of transforming union. Never did God leave her. So great was the intimacy between Our Lord and Our Lady that neither of them could stand to be out of the presence of each other.

When an earthly husband takes leave of his wife in order to go away on a business trip or when he needs to do something which causes him to be away from his wife for a while, he does not abandon her. No, he sets about ensuring that everything she needs is provided for and if there is something which must be done while he is gone and his wife cannot do it, he arranges for another man to come and tend to the material affairs so that his wife will be provided for. Here we see the Blessed Trinity ensuring that the Blessed Virgin would be taken care of by St. Joseph who was a good and just man, who worked hard to provide well for Our Lord and Our Lady.

Like all virtuous men, he respects the marriage of the woman that he must take care of and here we see why Our Lord not only appeared to St. Joseph to tell him that Our Lady was with Child by the power of the Holy Ghost, but also to indicate to him that there is a special connection between

the Holy Ghost and Our Lady. St. Joseph had to have known that his relationship with Our Lady would not be one of a normal man and wife. Rather, he had to know that he was the earthly adoptive father to whom Our Lord would be committed and to whom the wife of the Holy Ghost would be entrusted. We are not certain of how much St. Joseph knew, but I suspect that given the perfection and virtuousness of Our Lady as well as her constant recollection as a result of the transforming union, that he had some sort of knowledge of the constant and intimate relationship Our Lord had with Our Lady.

As Jesus grew “in wisdom and grace before God and man” Our Lady’s intimate relationship with God continued. But aside from a few instances of Mary’s presence in the Gospels, Our Lady tends to fall into the back ground so that Her Son may take the place that is rightfully His. But there comes a time when Our Lady is in the midst of the most important act of all time, i.e. the Passion and Death of Our Lord. There are several reasons Our Lady was present; the first and most obvious is that she represents the Church which St. Paul paints as a bride to Christ, i.e. to God, for she represents the Church at the foot of the cross from which the blessings of salvation flow. Moreover, Our Lord desired that the final sword shall pass indicating that since she is the co-redemptrix with Christ the Redeemer, she ought to under go the Passion with her Son. But there is more.

The suffering of Our Lady was so intense, not only because Jesus was her Son, but also, by virtue of God’s constant presence throughout Her Life, she knew how serious and grave an act it was to commit deicide, i.e. the killing of Jesus Christ who was God. She who experienced the goodness of God throughout the entire duration of Her Life beheld with her eyes and, in the end, held with her arms the Source of all goodness, joy, happiness and end of all men, i.e. the body which was joined to God Himself. How could she not suffer in seeing the tremendous beauty of the Son of God reduced to a scourged, whipped and crucified Body. How much clearer can the vileness, wickedness and malice of man be more clearly seen? Indeed. What a suffering it is to behold such evil and malice in light of the constant goodness she knew being in God’s most intimate presence. Yet, what joy she must have known when Christ resurrected! And when Our Lord ascended into heaven, she must have burned with desire to see Our Lord Face to face. While Christ was gone, Our Lady knew she must stay behind to give testimony to the fact that Jesus was Who the Apostles said He was because *she* was His Mother.

We do not know for certain if the Blessed Virgin died or not. If she did die, the Church is very clear to point out that her body suffered no form of corruption. For how could it? It was the tabernacle of God Himself! It was joined to the most pure of all the created souls! But the Church also teaches that whether we believe she died or not, it is a fact of history that she was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. At last, she was in the full company of Her Spouse. At last, nothing was hidden and at last their intimacy was perfect and complete.

It was at this time that God gave her the place which He had destined for her from before the world began, viz. that of Queen of Heaven and Earth. It seems to me that by her being the Queen of heaven this actually has two meanings. The first is that she now rules over all of those present in heaven and earth save God alone. But it also means that she has a special relationship with God Himself for she is His Queen as well. Not that she rules over Him in anyway, but that she is the heavenly consort of the King of Heaven. In heaven, no other person, no angel, no creature has as intimate relationship with God as Mary. Even the angels marvel at their relationship. There is no good, no grace, no blessing which God does not give her. In fact, every grace God gives to us He first gives to her. Just as an earthly husband seeks to please his wife, so too does Our Lord seek to please Our Lady by giving her everything and denying her nothing.

What a special grace it is for us to be able to even contemplate the wonder of their most intimate relationship. How in awe we ought to reflect how God has given Himself so intimately to Our Lady and how she, like her Divine Spouse, never denied God anything. For how can two who love each other so perfectly and so intensely ever deny each other anything. Mary, Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us. Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, pray for us.

Our Lady's Service to God  
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In our reflection of the most intimate relationship between Our Lady and Our Lord, we cannot help but realize what a profound love Our Lord had for Our Lady. But the relationship was not one sided, for we see through the Gospels that the Blessed Virgin likewise had a profound love for Our Lord. Our Lord said when He was on this earth that "if you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and Mary, as we mentioned before, never once broke a single commandment of Our Lord. Never once did she even think a thought contrary to justice, charity or purity and it is in this that we know that Our Lady kept the commandments, not only because God preserved her from violating them, but because she loved God deeply and abhorred even the thought of sin. Mary's love for God, again, as we see in the Gospels, plays itself out over the course of her life. We know that if someone loves someone, they do everything they can to please that person and this is the story of Our Lady's life: to please God in every moment, in every thought and in every action.

Clearly, sanctifying grace is that which makes us pleasing to Our Lord and at the very moment she was conceived, God infused in her soul sanctifying grace which made her most pleasing to Him. We do not know much about Our Lady prior to the angelic salutation but tradition has it that she was an exemplary child. St. Elizabeth and St. Zachary must have marveled at her wisdom and demeanor as a child; how she never fought what they asked, how she always submitted to them in her love for God. We know through tradition that Mary had a particular love and facility of grasp of the Ten Commandments and that she had studied the Judaic law. Throughout her life, she served Our Lord in prayer by never neglecting her obligation to pray which is part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment as well as the virtue of religion. She lived an exemplary Jewish life which must have been one of the things that attracted St. Joseph to her.

They always tell seminarians in protecting their vocation that a beautiful girl is never the one to worry about, rather it is the virtuous one. For a virtuous man sees the good of her virtue and is attracted to it. So too must it have been for St. Joseph in seeing not only her incomparable earthly beauty but also the magnificence of her moral and spiritual beauty, i.e. her virtuousness and holiness

of life. We may ask ourselves why other men did not find her attractive. My suspicion is that some did but I also believe that they had a certain fear of Our Lady. It seems to me that men who do not lead good lives may find a virtuous woman attractive, but part of a virtuous woman's make up is that she tolerates very little nonsense. She loves holiness and virtuousness and will expect the same desire in her husband. Men would have avoided Our Lady just as the doers of evil avoid the doers of goodness, just as creatures of darkness avoid the light; so too men who did not lead lives of grace would have avoided and feared Our Lady. But not so with St. Joseph; for he was a most righteous and upright man, a man of justice and holiness. Like St. John the Baptist, it is believed that St. Joseph was conceived in Original Sin but was sanctified in the womb of his mother. He led a life of holiness and virtuousness himself and upon the acceptance of Mary as his wife at the command of Our Lord in his dream, upon that acceptance he was from that moment on preserved in sanctifying grace. So when St. Joseph beheld the holiness, virtuousness and Mary's incomparable earthly beauty, he must have been moved with a profound sense of love for her. Perhaps this is why his respect for her throughout his life was unimaginable.

Once he knew that That Which was in the womb of Our Lady was conceived by the Holy Ghost, he could never see her as completely his own. His esteem for her only grew throughout their life together and in reverence and awe, he must have beheld her. For he knew, that no other creature had been given over so completely to Our Lord and no other creature had been deigned fit to be called into the service of Our Lord as the person in whose womb God's Son would dwell. St. Joseph must have known that Our Lady's role in salvation history was pivotal and so, as a faithful and just Jew, he would respect the mother of all mothers, viz. the mother of the Messiah Himself.

This calling into service of Our Lord which Our Lady accepted was a sign of her perfect submission to Her Divine spouse. She not only had an intimate relationship with her Divine Spouse, but she also served her Divine Spouse and never once disobeyed Him. She always sought to know His Holy Will so that she could set about fulfilling it in her daily life. When the angel of the Lord was sent to Our Lady and spoke of God's wondrous plans, she questioned the angel, not because she disbelieved, but because she was perplexed about how what he said would come about. The angel then informs her of God's plan to take her as His Spouse and she, like a perfect slave, submits to the plan of Her Master. Part of Our Lady's perplexity has to do with the fact that "she knew no man"

as Scripture says, which ultimately means that she never had violated the precepts of Our Lord regarding conjugal relations. Moreover, even though she was espoused to St. Joseph, they had not married and consequently, she did not know how God's plan was to come about.

But tradition seems to have provided even more of a back ground. According to Holy Tradition, it was believed that Our Lady had taken a private vow of celibacy. In recent years, modern Scripture scholars mocked the idea, pointing to fact that at that time, the Jewish women knew that the Messiah was due to come. And so no Jewish woman in her right mind would have taken a vow of celibacy because she would have thereby eliminated herself as a possible mother of the Messiah. Moreover, they argued that the Jews did not have a rite of celibacy, i.e. they do not take vows of celibacy. But the findings of Qumran have demonstrated that just before and during the time of Christ, the Essenes (a group of very conservative Jews) had a vow of celibacy. Consequently, it is entirely possible that Our Lady would have taken the vow since it is believed that both her and Christ may have had some contact with the Essenes. Moreover, it was believed that Our Lady took the vow as a sign of her complete dedication to God. Just as today priests and nuns take a vow of celibacy so that they can give themselves entirely to God and His Work, so too did Our Lady take a vow so that she would be able to give herself completely to God and to no one else. What then of St. Joseph's betrothal? It is also believed according to pious tradition that St. Joseph was aware of Our Lady's vow and had no intention of violating it. We now understand a bit why Our Lady was even more perplexed because even though she was betrothed to St. Joseph, there was no intention for conjugal relations.

But in perfect submission to Her Divine Spouse, Our Lady said those most glorious words every heard since the time of Adam and Eve "be done unto me according to thy word." Unlike Eve who had eaten the apple and then sought to convince her husband, i.e she tried to control and dominate him and God since she had already been infected by sin, Mary never once tried to dominate Her Divine Spouse. Mary's submission to her Spouse, as St. Paul, moved by divine inspiration, calls on all women to do, was perfect. She did not try to make the relationship with her Spouse on her terms as Eve had done. She did not try to manipulate Him as Eve had done. She knew from the depths of her soul that her relationship with God must be one HIS terms. Like all religion, like any creature who will ultimately be saved, the way we worship God, the way we serve God is not ours

to determine but God's. Perhaps this is why religion has taken such a beating in the last few decades because man thinks he can serve God the way he wants rather than the way God wants. And perhaps this is why there is little love for Our Lady these days because she, above all other creatures, demonstrated by her entire life that service to God is on God's terms. It is God's place to determine how and when we will serve Him. This is why Mary is the anti-type of Eve, for Eve thought she would determine her relationship with God, whereas Mary knew and submitted to the fact that her relationship with God was on God's terms. Why else would she say "I am the Handmaid of the Lord." In other words, I am God's servant, I know my place, and any service He asks of me, in perfect humility, I submit to.

In one act of submission to God, she entered into the most perfect form of service of God and man the world had ever seen. But her service was not over, it was merely raised to a new level. For nine months she carried Our Lord in Her womb. Her very body, her very self was the instrument of her service to Him. And unlike all of us, as soon as Mary submits and then knows that she is the Mother of God, she does not go around blabbing it like an old hen in a gossip session. No what does she do? She tells no one and she immediately rises to go to St. Elisabeth for two reasons. The first is to confirm that St. Elisabeth is pregnant but more so, as the Scripture tell us, to stay and help her. Remember, St. Elisabeth is of advanced years and so her pregnancy must have been more difficult than normal since she would not have the energy to take care of the household duties while she is getting close to term. Consequently, Our Lady stays with St. Elisabeth as an act of service.

Imagine that! The woman who has God in her womb comes and cleans your house! We should feel shame at such a thought of Our Lady cleaning our house because we know that we are completely unworthy of such a thing. St. Elisabeth should have been cleaning Mary's house! But that was not God's Will; for it was necessary for all to see that Mary's truthfulness about what God had done to her as we see in the Magnificat was in fact attested to by Our Lady's perfect humility. If she, as the mother of God, was asked by Our Lord to clean St. Elisabeth's house, then that is what God will get. For humility, that virtue by which we willingly live in accordance with the truth, gave testimony to God's presence. For God does not work among the proud but the humble alone, and so it was a testimony to God's working in Mary that she would submit to such humble work.

Which should be a moment of joy and hope on our part. For often we are beset by the

temptation of the evil one who tries to get us not to ask Our Lady for certain things, especially small things, because we feel that we are not worthy of it and that we cannot ask Our Lady to tend to such menial things. But this is completely false, for we see that Our Lady wants to take care of our every need regardless of how small, just as she did for St. Elizabeth. Granted we are completely unworthy, but Our Lady, from the very beginning of her motherhood, was prepared and become accustomed to serving man for the sake of God in ways which are, at times, on the scale of things rather insignificant and unimportant. Moreover, she knew that we must always serve even those who are unworthy of our services, for it is what God desires.

After St. Elizabeth has St. John, Mary returns home and now there is a problem. Because Mary behaves in an opposite fashion to Eve, she does not avoid certain problems. But then again, because she does not behave like Eve, God takes care of her. In other words, when Eve first ate the apple, what was the first thing she did? She started talking and blabbing to Adam. She sweet talks her husband into doing something he should not do and all of which is driven out of her new found pride resulting from her sin. Eve was asked not to eat of the tree and disobeyed, Mary was asked to bring the Man who would hang upon the Tree and she obeyed. Mary did not, like Eve, get puffed up with pride and go blabbing, rather she submitted in humility and silence to the will of Our Lord. Consequently, she did not tell St. Joseph before she left to see St. Elizabeth and so when she returns St. Joseph is unaware of the circumstances and thinks he must put her away quietly since she is with child. Had Adam put his wife away quietly, we would not be in the mess we are in. But St. Joseph was not to do what Adam was supposed to, rather he was to accept his betrothed and her new condition. Mary said nothing and was willing to accept the humiliation.. But deep down the words of the Angel echoed in her ears that the power of the Most High will overshadow her and so she knew God would take care of the situation. So indeed He did, He made sure that St. Joseph knew what His Will was and what had happened. The story of Adam and Eve and St. Joseph and Mary are complete opposites, for Eve fell and talked to Adam and he listened to her rather than God. Mary became with child, St. Joseph thought of putting her away but accepted her not because of what she said, for she said nothing, but because he listened to God.

Mary is then betrothed to St. Joseph and she carries Her Son to term. She gives birth to Her Son and for the first twelve years we do not know too much of what happened. We know that they

had to flee and that Our Lady acted in perfect submission to St. Joseph by doing as he asked. She later returned with St. Joseph at his behest. Notice, that God knows that Our Lady will do what St. Joseph asks. Our Lord does not appear to Our Lady and tell her to return, he tells St. Joseph because He knows that Mary will follow the right order set up by the Natural Law and do what her husband asks of Her. Again in a spirit of perfect submission and service, she does what she is asked. She does not argue with St. Joseph but sets about doing what God has asked through her husband. And God Himself is following the order which He set up, by informing the head of the household, viz. the husband, so that the household will do His Will.

Our Lady then serves God by raising His Son. She feeds Him, clothes Him, does everything necessary to bring Him to the age in which He shall leave her to do His Father's Will. The next time we see Our Lady's service is in her search for Jesus when she and St. Joseph think He is lost but He is actually in the temple. We see this is a sign of Our Lady's commitment to being a good parent and to be a good parent you must put the needs of your child before your own needs and wants, and so she does that. The Gospel writers do not tell us much about Our Lady until it comes time for the wedding at Cana.

At Cana, the bride and groom miscalculate how much wine to have around and so Our Lady driven out of compassion for them, goes to Christ knowing that He is capable of straightening the situation out. Our Lady tells Christ of the needs of the couple which tells us a great deal about the relationship between Mary and Jesus. First, Mary seems to be in the habit of merely indicating what must be done. She does not really put it in the form of a question, not because she is demanding, but because she knows that her Son will never deny her anything. So as Jesus grew up, she merely had to tell Him what was to be done and like an obedient child, He would do it. This also tells us something about Her service to us. In other words, Mary is the intercessor between man and God. We see that this is the case by the very fact that she goes to intercede for the married couple at Cana; we also know that God will never deny her anything.

Christ says in return "woman, what is it to me and thee?" Not because He is telling her "no," but because it is a sign that some times things which God would not bother with or which He normally would not grant, He will grant them, if Our Lady asks. This gives support to St. Louis De Montfort's teaching that a single sigh from Our Lady is more powerful than all the martyrdoms,

prayers, sacrifices and good works of all the saints combined. For God may deny all the saints a request, but He will never deny Our Lady anything. So what happens, Our Lady then turns to the stewards and tells them the principle of her entire life and being, “do what ever He tells you.” For the entire duration of her existence, she has done nothing but what God has told her to do. Consequently, if we are to be like Our Lady, we must do as she does, viz. whatever God tells us. Moreover, we must recognize that if we are going to press Our Lady into service for us by asking for something from God, we must be prepared to do whatever God asks in return. Very often we will ask Our Lord and Our Lady for something and we beg and beg for it and finally they give it to us and then we complain because what they gave entails work, sacrifice, tribulations and difficulties. The stewards, then, act the way Our Lady did at the Annunciation. The minute God asked Our Lady to do something, she said yes and she did it. Moreover, she immediately got up and went to be of service to St. Elizabeth. The stewards listen to the words of Christ and do what they are asked and as a result the miracle takes place. We do not hear too much about Our Lady again until it comes time for the Passion.

If Mary is to continue to serve man even after her Assumption into heaven, it is most fitting that she be present for the Passion and Death of Our Lord. In other words, one of the reasons God will deny nothing to Our Lady now is the fact that she stood by Him during His darkest hour. God would never turn to Mary and say, why should I give you what you ask, you abandoned Me at My darkest hour. No, if she was to be the Queen of Heaven and Earth, if Mary was to be the Mediatrix of All Grace, i.e. the one standing between God and man, then she must stand at the foot of the Cross next to the Mediator Himself, Jesus Christ the Eternal High Priest. She can lay claim to the title of the Mediatrix between man and God because she participated in the suffering and death of Christ the Mediator.

By standing at the foot of the Cross, she suffered tremendously. But she stood there willingly, again, because it was something God asked her to do. Perhaps one of the reasons I have a particular fondness for the Pieta by Michelangelo, is because of the expression on the face of Our Lady. It is not the expression of uncontrollable blubbery as some depict her. It is not an indifference as others have depicted her. No, it is the depiction of Our Lady the way it should be; for Our Lady was a woman of tremendous virtue who wept the tears of a mother who has lost her Son. The statue

depicts Our Lady as having completed all of the suffering, by her surrendering everything she is and everything she has to God. Her face is the face of someone who can cry no more because she has already lamented in the depths of her soul. No the statue depicts Our Lady as someone who is completely emotionally exhausted. Our Lady served God so perfectly that she, like the Body of Christ placed in her arms, could give no more. Just as we who after hard work become exhausted or after the death of a loved one reach a point in which we are an emotionally exhausted, so too Our Lady stood there, holding the Body of the Only Begotten Son of God the Father, in complete and absolute desolation.

Man had killed God! Like Adam and Eve before them who killed the indwelling of God in their soul by mortal sin, these men had ended the dwelling of God among men. Like all murderous generations after Adam and Eve, man had laid waste to the work of God. Not only was Our Lady emotional exhausted because her Son was dead, but also because she experienced the profound evil deep in the heart of man affected by Original Sin. She who once held Goodness Itself in her arms, now held a lifeless Body. There is a certain acceptance by those mothers whose sons are killed because they have committed evil. But to Mary, she experienced what it meant to see Her Son killed for doing what was right. Her Son was killed Who never committed a sin, who was Justice Itself, and yet, He was to undergo an act of injustice. *We* would tend to get angry and seek vengeance, but not Our Lady. She held the Lifeless Body of Her Son in her arms in total surrender. For as they have killed her Son, they have, in a way, killed her. The whole reason for her existence, her life, the joy of her life, the source of all the truth she knew, everything she held dear, lay lifeless in her arms. It is as if the entire book of Lamentations by Jeremiah was written as he gazed upon the sight of Our Lady holding Jesus' lifeless Body: "Weeping she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her" (Lam. 1:2). "And from the daughter of Sion all her beauty is departed" (Lam. 1:6). "Therefore do I weep, and my eyes run down with water: because the comforter, the relief of my soul, is far from me" (Lam. 1:16). "My eyes have failed with weeping, my bowels are poured out upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people" (Lam. 2:11) "Their heart cried to the Lord upon the walls of the daughter of Sion: Let tears run down like a torrent day and night: give thyself no rest" (Lam. 2:18).

With psychological, emotional and physical exhaustion and agony, Our Lady accompanies

the men to the tomb. As an act of charity, St. Joseph of Arimathaea places Christ's Body in the tomb he had intended for himself. As Christ was wrapped in the burial shroud, many thought that this would be the last time Our Lady would gaze upon the Body of Her Son. She departs with the rest; it is over, it is done. Her own death to self is complete and with Christ in spirit, she lays in the tomb with His Body.

For three days she suffers interior death but upon the rising of Our Lord, her joy knows no bounds. We do not hear much again about Our Lady. Pious tradition tells us that she was present at the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. It also tells us that afterwards she lived with St. John until it came time for her to take her Role as Queen of Heaven and Earth. Once she became Our Beloved Queen, her service grew to such an extent that she became the Mediatrix of All Graces. Every grace you have ever received or will receive will come from the hands of Our Lady. No greater service can any mere creature render to Her God. Our Lady of Jesus Christ Crucified, pray for us. Queen of Heaven and Earth, pray for us.

Our Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Conference Lincoln  
December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1998

In reflecting on the most intimate relationship Our Lady has with Our Lord and considering the most perfect response of Our Lady in the service to God, we ought to be moved to a profound devotion to her. We must always remember, however, that devotion is not based on emotion, even though some emotions may accompany it. Rather, “devotion consists...essentially in the promptness of the will to serve God, namely, to subordinate our whole life to His Glory and desires” (Parente, *Dictionary of Dogmatic Theology*, p. 76). Our devotion to Our Lady must first and foremost be an imitation of her devotion to God. We have already mentioned Mary’s perfect service and complete willingness to do anything that God asked whatsoever. We also mentioned the fact that when Our Lady intervened on behalf of those at the Wedding at Cana, she told the steward to “do whatever He tells you” which is an incitement of the steward to devotion to Our Lord. This willingness to always do the Holy Will of God is a disposition most pleasing to Our Lord and He tends to bestow great graces on those who foster this disposition.

A proud man is not capable of devotion, because a proud man has his own concerns at the foremost of his mind and heart. Whereas, the humble man, the person who imitates the profound humility of Our Lady, recognizes his place as a creature totally dependent on God for everything and consequently, he will do whatever God asks. This is why it is very important for us to study the life of Mary because by doing so we see those virtues and dispositions which we are capable of imitating them and therefore advance in holiness. The more we become like Our Lady, the more we are made over into her image, the more God will be pleased with us. And is this not the way it should be? For the reason Our Lady is most pleasing to Our Lord is because she is a most perfect image of Her Son who is justice itself. Justice is not only the virtue by which we render to someone his due, it is also that thing which makes us “right” or “good” in the eyes of God. One of Mary’s titles is “Mirror of Justice” because Christ who is Justice Itself since He is God, is perfectly reflected in Our Lady. Devotion to Our Lady ought to be of such a sort that it never stops with her. Just as we do not look at a mirror for the sake of inspecting or looking at the mirror itself but to see what is reflected, so too is devotion to Our Lady like a spiritual mirror, if you will, in which we look to see all the glory and

wonders of God as it is reflected through her. Her only choice of words at the Magnificat indicate to us that she is something which the divine image somehow passes through. She said “my soul magnifies the Lord,” and the reason she said it was because God’s Own Intrinsic Glory is perfect and complete in itself and God needs no creature for His Own Glory. But by creating, God’s Glory was extended outside of Himself and Mary who is the vessel of all virtues, perfections and graces reflects and focuses, like a magnify glass, the perfection, grace and virtues of God Himself. Those who try to argue against St. Louis Mary De Montfort who says that in having a total consecration to Our Lady is ultimately a complete surrendering to God of everything that we are, do not recognize that Our Lady is a mirror. We do not stop at her just as we do not look at the mirror itself, but in her we see God focused, as it were, so that we can see Him more perfectly. If our devotion to God becomes perfect, we will be like Our Lady, i.e. a mirror reflecting God’s glory. But like all mirrors, if the glass is not perfect or damaged, then it does not reflect the image well and so we too must strive to be perfect like Our Lady so that we may reflect God perfectly without the corruption of sin which damages that reflection.

Devotion, then, to Our Lady, is ultimately devotion to God, for again, we do not stop with Our Lady but instead she directs and focuses our attention on God Himself of Whom she is the perfect image. In our devotion we must be totally disposed to the service of God, for Our Lady would have it no other way. If you are to have a strong devotion to Mary, she will not allow it unless your devotion to God is striving for perfection. Devotion to Our Lady, like devotion to God and to the saints, has two parts, viz. interior and exterior.

The interior aspect to our devotion involves two things, viz. our intellect and will. We must strive for a perfect knowledge of God and Mary, which demands exercising humility by which we are able to live in accordance with the truth. Our commitment to truth must exceed even our own life to live; Our Lady herself gives testimony to this by the very fact that when she agreed to be the mother of Our Lord, she placed her life on the lines since she did not know what would happen to her life. But her willingness to live in accordance with Truth Itself, i.e. God, was perfect. We must therefore always try and foster a right disposition towards all of the teachings regarding Our Lady taught to us by the Church and in that process our devotion will increase.

Our knowledge of Mary will provide a great deal of material for reflection. For example, if

we accept and love the holy doctrine of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, we cannot but help to love Mary herself. What kind of person cannot have a deep admiration, awe, respect and love for something as good and as perfect as Our Lady? The only part of creation that does not love her is that which is under the sway of or part of the demonic. For if one is cold, indifferent or hostile to Our Lady, then you are part of the seed as mentioned in Genesis which has enmity with Our Lady. Yet I cannot help but think that regardless of how hardened a soul is in this life, that if God was to show him the wonder and grandeur of Our Lady that person would be moved to a profound love and affection for her. After all, one of the titles of Our Lady is Mother most amiable. In order for us to love Our Lady we ought to learn about her and reflect on her.

Moreover, out of a proper devotion to all of the teachings of the Church we should always avoid scepticism about those teachings which the Church has formally taught about Our Lady. For example, today, it is common practice to snicker and jest about Our Lady's perpetual virginity. But we must be very clear about the fact that the Church so loved and respected the teaching of Our Lady's perpetual virginity, that it formally defined it; in a word, if you do not believe that Our Lady's virginity remained in tact before, during and after she gave birth to Our Lord, then you are not a Catholic. The sign of a vibrant Catholic faith in an individual is a sign that he is willing to defend the teachings of the Church regarding Our Lady, that he loves those teachings greatly and finds great joy in them. We must always remember that Our God is a God of honor and he will defend the honor of Our Lady. Therefore, there is a great punishment and chastisement for those who speak ill of Mary and their suffering will be great if they do not have a change of heart.

The second aspect of the interior part of our devotion to Our Lady corresponds to the will, i.e. we must love Our Lady. We must be very careful to be clear that love is not an emotion or appetite and that if we truly love Our Lady, it will not be based on our emotions or moods. Those whose devotion is based on emotion tend to have short fits of devotion to her but when the emotion wanes so does their devotion. Moreover, their devotion to Our Lady is governed by the appetite of *curiositas*, i.e. curiosity. Consequently, they go around apparition chasing because they have a desire not to love Our Lady more, but to gratify their desire to see supernatural phenomena. Consequently, they believe everything that is told to them regardless of how fantastic it is and they do not act reasonably. True devotion to Our Lady strives to act out of real love and not out of appetite,

consequently it will guard against curiosity. As a result, the person will curb their appetites by being sure they only give full assent to those apparitions approved by the Church. But if the person really loves Our Lady, once the Church has given approval, the person will set out learning about the apparition to come to know the will of Our Lady which is in perfect accord with the Will of God. The person does not seek after the apparition to sate some inordinate desire to see miracles, but rather will appreciate the miraculous work that God has done through Our Lady.

Yet, love is never satisfied with itself, i.e. it always seeks to go outside of itself and this brings us to the second part of devotion, viz. the exterior part. If we truly love Our Lady, we will express that love in proper ways by performing acts which are in accordance with that love. Those who say they have a strong devotion to Our Lady but never do anything for her, are not telling you the truth. If you really love someone, you want to do whatever you can for that person because you want to please that person. The best way to love Our Lady and to please her is to make the total consecration to her according to the teachings and mind of St. Louis De Montfort.

In his book on *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, St. Louis observes that since Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth, we are, in effect, her property. For it is a matter of fact that God will deny her nothing, and so with respect to us, she can have anything she wants since God will give it to her. Therefore, we are totally at her whim and we call this in common parlance “owning a thing.” Since we are Mary’s property and if we are humble, then we will recognize that and act accordingly. Consequently, since everything we have and are is hers already, then it is best that we recognize that and offer everything that we have, everything that we are, all our prayers sufferings and good works up to her.

We do this for two reasons. The first is for our own purification; for it is fact that we are all in need of purification and if we surrender to Our Lady everything, our house, our family, our very lives, we are placing in her hands those things which we hold most dear. Therefore, by doing so we are on the way to perfect detachment which is necessary to advance in holiness. This surrendering of everything that we are and have to her, by being a form of detachment, purifies our intentions and lives. The second is that what we offer to God is always tainted with self will and imperfections and so it is best if we first give it to Our Lady who will purify, sanctify and strip from our offering any imperfections and unholiness. Since Our Lady by the act of her *fiat*, i.e. “let it be done to me

according to thy word,” at the time of the Incarnation surrendered everything she has to God, whatever we give her, she in turn gives it to God. But just as her offering of her immaculate self to God at the incarnation was a perfect offering, so too does she make perfect and offer up perfectly what little we have given her. If you want your prayers, sufferings and good work to be more efficacious, you need to give them to Our Lady who can make it a worthy offering.

In addition to giving Our Lady everything, we will also do exterior acts of devotion towards her. We will decorate her statues with flowers as a sign of love and reverence. We will say her Rosary so that through it she can conquer heresy and evil and overcome Satan and his minions. We will make acts of reparation for the sins committed against her and the holy doctrines taught by the Church regarding her. We will turn to her in our every need, thank her for every gift, praise her for her magnificence and ask mercy for our wrong doings. By asking her, as the Mirror of Justice, we are in effect asking God and so He will grant us everything through her. We will do all those things which show our love and devotion to her and by doing so we shall win her favor and in that alone we can have perfect hope in our salvation.

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