



APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI

MARIALIS CULTUS

FOR THE RIGHT ORDERING AND DEVELOPMENT
OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

To All Bishops in Peace and Communion
with the Apostolic See

February 2, 1974

INTRODUCTION

**Division of the Treatise
Occasion and Purpose of the Document**

Venerable Brothers:

Health and the Apostolic Blessing

From the moment when we were called to the See of Peter, we have constantly striven to enhance devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, not only with the intention of interpreting the sentiments of the Church and our own personal inclination but also because, as is well known, this devotion forms a very noble part of the whole sphere of that sacred worship in which there intermingle the highest expressions of wisdom and of religion(1) and which is therefore the primary task of the People of God.

Precisely with a view to this task, we have always favored and encouraged the great work of liturgical reform promoted by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, and it has certainly come about not without a particular design of divine Providence that the first conciliar document which together with the venerable Fathers we approved and signed *in Spiritu Sancto* was the Constitution [*Sacrosanctum concilium*](#). The purpose of this document was precisely to restore and enhance the liturgy and to make more fruitful the participation of the faithful in the sacred mysteries.(2) From that time onwards, many acts of our pontificate have been directed towards the improvement of divine worship, as is demonstrated by the fact that we have promulgated in these recent years numerous books of the Roman Rite, restored according to the principles and norms of the same Council. For this we profoundly thank the Lord, the giver of all good things, and we are grateful to the episcopal conferences and individual bishops who in various ways have collaborated with us in the preparation of these books.

We contemplate with joy and gratitude the work so far accomplished and the first positive results of the liturgical renewal, destined as they are to increase as this renewal comes to be understood in its basic purposes and correctly applied. At the same time we do not cease with vigilant solicitude to concern ourselves with whatever can give orderly fulfillment to the renewal of the worship with which the Church in spirit and truth (cf. Jn. 4:24) adores the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, "venerates with special love Mary the most holy Mother of God"(3) and honors with religious devotion the memory of the martyrs and the other saints.

The development, desired by us, of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is an indication of the Church's genuine piety. This devotion fits-as we have indicated above-into the only worship that is rightly called

"Christian," because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ, and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father. In the sphere of worship this devotion necessarily reflects God's redemptive plan, in which a special form of veneration is appropriate to the singular place which Mary occupies in that plan.(4) Indeed every authentic development of Christian worship is necessarily followed by a fitting increase of veneration for the Mother of the Lord. Moreover, the history of piety shows how "the various forms of devotion towards the Mother of God that the Church has approved within the limits of wholesome and orthodox doctrine"(5) have developed in harmonious subordination to the worship of Christ, and have gravitated towards this worship as to their natural and necessary point of reference. The same is happening in our own time. The Church's reflection today on the mystery of Christ and on her own nature has led her to find at the root of the former and is a culmination of the latter the same figure of a woman: the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church. And the increased knowledge of Mary's mission has become joyful veneration of her and adoring respect for the wise plan of God, who has placed within His family (the Church), as in every home, the figure of a Woman, who in a hidden manner and in a spirit of service watches over that family "and carefully looks after it until the glorious day of the Lord."(6)

In our time, the changes that have occurred in social behavior, people's sensibilities, manners of expression in art and letters and in the forms of social communication have also influenced the manifestations of religious sentiment. Certain practices of piety that not long ago seemed suitable for expressing the religious sentiment of individuals and of Christian communities seem today inadequate or unsuitable because they are linked with social and cultural patterns of the past. On the other hand in many places people are seeking new ways of expressing the unchangeable relationship of creatures with their Creator, of children with their Father. In some people this may cause temporary confusion. But anyone who, with trust in God reflects upon these phenomena discovers that many tendencies of modern piety (for example, the interiorization of religious sentiment) are meant to play their part in the development of Christian piety in general and devotion to the Blessed Virgin in particular. Thus our own time, faithfully attentive to tradition and to the progress of theology and the sciences, will make its contribution of praise to her whom, according to her own prophetic words, all generations will call blessed (cf. Lk. 1:48).

We therefore judge it in keeping with our apostolic service, venerable Brothers, to deal, in a sort of dialogue, with a number of themes connected with the place that the Blessed Virgin occupies in the Church's worship. These themes have already been partly touched upon by the Second Vatican Council(7) and also by myself,(8) but it is useful to return to them in order to remove doubts and, especially, to help the development of that devotion to the Blessed Virgin which in the Church is motivated by the Word of God and practiced in the Spirit of Christ.

We therefore wish to dwell upon a number of questions concerning the relationship between the sacred liturgy and devotion to the Blessed Virgin (I), to offer considerations and directives suitable for favoring the development of that devotion (II) and finally to put forward a number of reflections intended to encourage the restoration, in a dynamic and more informed manner, of the recitation of the Rosary, the practice of which was so strongly recommended by our predecessors and is so widely diffused among the Christian people (III).

PART ONE

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Liturgy

1. As we prepare to discuss the place which the Blessed Virgin Mary occupies in Christian worship, we must first turn our attention to the sacred liturgy. In addition to its rich doctrinal content, the liturgy has an incomparable pastoral effectiveness and a recognized exemplary conduct for the other forms of worship.

We would have liked to take into consideration the various liturgies of the East and the West, but for the purpose of this document we shall dwell almost exclusively on the books of the Roman Rite. In fact, in accordance with the practical norms issued by the Second Vatican Council,(9) it is this Rite alone which has been the object of profound renewal. This is true also in regard to expressions of veneration for Mary. This Rite therefore deserves to be carefully considered and evaluated.

Section One

The Blessed Virgin in the Revised Roman Liturgy

2. The reform of the Roman liturgy presupposed a careful restoration of its General Calendar. This Calendar is arranged in such a way as to give fitting prominence to the celebration on appropriate days of the work of salvation. It distributes throughout the year the whole mastery of Christ, from the Incarnation to the expectation of His return in glory,(10) and thus makes it possible in a more organic and closely-knit fashion to include the commemoration of Christ's Mother in the annual cycle of the mysteries of her Son.

3. For example, during Advent there are many liturgical references to Mary besides the Solemnity of December 8, which is a joint celebration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, of the basic preparation (cf. Is. 11:1, 10) for the coming of the Savior and of the happy beginning of the Church without spot or wrinkle.(11) Such liturgical references are found especially on the days from December 17 to 24, and more particularly on the Sunday before Christmas, which recalls the ancient prophecies concerning the Virgin Mother and the Messiah(12) and includes readings from the Gospel concerning the imminent birth of Christ and His precursor.(13)

4. In this way the faithful, living in the liturgy the spirit of Advent, by thinking about the inexpressible love with which the Virgin Mother awaited her Son,(14) are invited to take her as a model and to prepare themselves to meet the Savior who is to come. They must be "vigilant in prayer and joyful in...praise."(15) We would also remark that the Advent liturgy, by linking the awaiting of the Messiah and the awaiting of the glorious return of Christ with the admirable commemoration of His Mother, presents a happy balance in worship. This balance can be taken as a norm for preventing any tendency (as has happened at times in certain forms of popular piety) to separate devotion to the Blessed Virgin from its necessary point of reference-Christ. It also ensures that this season, as liturgy experts have noted, should be considered as a time particularly suited to devotion to the Mother of the Lord. This is an orientation that we confirm and which we hope to see accepted and followed everywhere.

5. The Christmas season is a prolonged commemoration of the divine, virginal and salvific motherhood of her whose "inviolable virginity brought the Saviour into the world."(16) In fact, on the Solemnity of the Birth of Christ the Church both adores the Savior and venerates His glorious Mother. On the Epiphany, when she celebrates the universal call to salvation, the Church contemplates the Blessed Virgin, the true Seat of Wisdom and true Mother of the King, who presents to the Wise Men, for their adoration, the Redeemer of all peoples (cf. Mt. 2:11). On the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (the Sunday within the octave of Christmas) the Church meditates with profound reverence upon the holy life led in the house at Nazareth by Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, Mary His Mother, and Joseph the just man (cf. Mt. 1:19).

In the revised ordering of the Christmas period it seems to us that the attention of all should be directed towards the restored Solemnity of Mary the holy Mother of God. This celebration, placed on January 1 in conformity with the ancient indication of the liturgy of the City of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the "holy Mother...through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life."(17) It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (cf. Lk. 2:14), and for imploring from God, through

the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace. It is for this reason that, in the happy concurrence of the Octave of Christmas and the first day of the year, we have instituted the World Day of Peace, an occasion that is gaining increasing support and already bringing forth fruits of peace in the hearts of many.

6. To the two solemnities already mentioned (the Immaculate Conception and the Divine Motherhood) should be added the ancient and venerable celebrations of March 25 and August 15.

For the Solemnity of the Incarnation of the Word, in the Roman Calendar the ancient title-the Annunciation of the Lord-has been deliberately restored, but the feast was and is a joint one of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin: of the Word, who becomes Son of Mary (Mk. 6:3), and of the Virgin, who becomes Mother of God. With regard to Christ, the East and the West, in the inexhaustible riches of their liturgies, celebrate this solemnity as the commemoration of the salvific "fiat" of the Incarnate Word, who, entering the world, said: "God, here I am! I am coming to obey Your will" (cf. Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:8-9). They commemorate it as the beginning of the redemption and of the indissoluble and wedded union of the divine nature with human nature in the one Person of the Word. With regard to Mary, these liturgies celebrate it as a feast of the new Eve, the obedient and faithful virgin, who with her generous "fiat" (cf. Lk. 1:38) became through the working of the Spirit the Mother of God, but also the true Mother of the living, and, by receiving into her womb the one Mediator (cf. 1 Tm. 2:5), became the true Ark of the Covenant and true Temple of God. These liturgies celebrate it as a culminating moment in the salvific dialogue between God and man, and as a commemoration of the Blessed Virgin's free consent and cooperation in the plan of redemption.

The solemnity of August 15 celebrates the glorious Assumption of Mary into heaven. It is a feast of her destiny of fullness and blessedness, of the glorification of her immaculate soul and of her virginal body, of her perfect configuration to the Risen Christ; a feast that sets before the eyes of the Church and of all mankind the image and the consoling proof of the fulfillment of their final hope, namely, that this full glorification is the destiny of all those whom Christ has made His brothers, having "flesh and blood in common with them" (Heb. 2:14; cf. Gal. 4:4). The Solemnity of the Assumption is prolonged in the celebration of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which occurs seven days later. On this occasion we contemplate her who, seated beside the King of ages, shines forth as Queen and intercedes as Mother.(18) These four solemnities therefore, mark with the highest liturgical rank the main dogmatic truths concerning the handmaid of the lord.

7. After the solemnities just mentioned, particular consideration must be given to those celebrations that commemorate salvific events in which the Blessed Virgin was closely associated with her Son. Such are the feasts of the Nativity of Our Lady (September 8), "the hope of the entire world and the dawn of salvation"(19); and the Visitation (May 31), in which the liturgy recalls the "Blessed Virgin Mary carrying her Son within her,"(20) and visiting Elizabeth to offer charitable assistance and to proclaim the mercy of God the Savior.(21) Then there is the commemoration of Our Lady of Sorrows (September 15), a fitting occasion for reliving a decisive moment in the history of salvation and for venerating, together with the Son "lifted up on the cross, His suffering Mother."(22)

The feast of February 2, which has been given back its ancient name, the Presentation of the Lord, should also be considered as a joint commemoration of the Son and of the Mother, if we are fully to appreciate its rich content. It is the celebration of a mystery of salvation accomplished by Christ, a mystery with which the Blessed virgin was intimately associated as the Mother of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, as the one who performs a mission belonging to ancient Israel, and as the model for the new People of God, which is ever being tested in its faith and hope by suffering and persecution (cf. Lk. 2:21-35).

8. The restored Roman Calendar gives particular prominence to the celebrations listed above, but it also includes other kinds of commemorations connected with local devotions and which have acquired a wider popularity and interest (e.g., February 11, Our Lady of Lourdes August 5, the Dedication of the Basilica

of St. Mary Major). Then there are others, originally celebrated by particular religious families but which today, by reason of the popularity they have gained, can truly be considered ecclesial (e.g., July 16, Our Lady of Mount Carmel; October 7, Our Lady of the Rosary). There are still others which, apart from their apocryphal content, present lofty and exemplary values and carry on venerable traditions having their origin especially in the East (e.g., the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin, celebrated on the Saturday following the second Sunday after Pentecost).

9. Nor must one forget that the General Roman Calendar does not include all celebrations in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Rather, it is for individual Calendars to include, with fidelity to liturgical norms but with sincere endorsement, the Marian feasts proper to the different local Churches. Lastly, it should be noted that frequent commemorations of the Blessed Virgin are possible through the use of the Saturday Masses of our Lady. This is an ancient and simple commemoration and one that is made very adaptable and varied by the flexibility of the modern Calendar and the number of formulas provided by the Missal.

10. In this Apostolic Exhortation we do not intend to examine the whole content of the new Roman Missal. But by reason of the work of evaluation that we have undertaken to carry out in regard to the revised books of the Roman Rite,(23) we would like to mention some of the aspects and themes of the Missal. In the first place, we are pleased to note how the Eucharistic Prayers of the Missal, in admirable harmony with the Eastern liturgies,(24) contain a significant commemoration of the Blessed Virgin. For example, the ancient Roman Canon, which commemorates the Mother of the Lord in terms full of doctrine and devotional inspiration: "In union with the whole Church we honor Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God." In a similar way the recent Eucharistic Prayer III expresses with intense supplication the desire of those praying to share with the Mother the inheritance of sons: "May he make us an everlasting gift to you (the Father) and enable us to share in the inheritance of your saints, with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God." This daily commemoration, by reason of its place at the heart of the divine Sacrifice, should be considered a particularly expressive form of the veneration that the Church pays to the "Blessed of the Most High" (cf. Lk. 1:28).

11. As we examine the texts of the revised Missal we see how the great Marian themes of the Roman prayerbook have been accepted in perfect doctrinal continuity with the past. Thus, for example, we have the themes of Mary's Immaculate Conception and fullness of grace, the divine motherhood, the unblemished and fruitful virginity, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, Mary's cooperation in the work of her Son, her exemplary sanctity, merciful intercession, Assumption into heaven, maternal Queenship and many other themes. We also see how other themes, in a certain sense new ones, have been introduced in equally perfect harmony with the theological developments of the present day. Thus, for example, we have the theme of Mary and the Church, which has been inserted into the texts of the Missal in a variety of aspects, a variety that matches the many and varied relations that exist between the Mother of Christ and the Church. For example, in the celebration of the Immaculate Conception which texts recognize the beginning of the Church, the spotless Bride of Christ.(25) In the Assumption they recognize the beginning that has already been made and the image of what, for the whole Church, must still come to pass.(26) In the mystery of Mary's motherhood they confess that she is the Mother of the Head and of the members—the holy Mother of God and therefore the provident Mother of the Church.(27)

When the liturgy turns its gaze either to the primitive Church or to the Church of our own days it always finds Mary. In the primitive Church she is seen praying with the apostles(28); in our own day she is actively present, and the Church desires to live the mystery of Christ with her: "Grant that your Church which with Mary shared Christ's passion may be worthy to share also in his resurrection."(29) She is also seen represented as a voice of praise in unison with which the Church wishes to give glory to God: "...with her [Mary] may we always praise you."(30) And since the liturgy is worship that requires as way of living consistent with it, it asks that devotion to the Blessed Virgin should become a concrete and deeply-felt love for the Church, as is wonderfully expressed in the prayer after Communion in the Mass

of September: "...that as we recall the sufferings shared by the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may with the Church fulfill in ourselves what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ."

12. The Lectionary is one of the books of the Roman Rite that has greatly benefited from the post-conciliar reform, by reason both of its added texts and of the intrinsic value of these texts, which contain the ever-living and efficacious word of God (cf. Heb. 4:12). This rich collection of biblical texts has made it possible to arrange the whole history of salvation in an orderly three-year cycle and to set forth more completely the mystery of Christ. The logical consequence has been that the Lectionary contains a larger number of Old and New Testament readings concerning the Blessed Virgin. This numerical increase has not however been based on random choice: only those readings have been accepted which in different ways and degrees can be considered Marian, either from the evidence of their content or from the results of careful exegesis, supported by the teachings of the magisterium or by solid Tradition. It is also right to observe that these readings occur not only on feasts of the Blessed Virgin but are read on many other occasions, for example on certain Sundays during the liturgical year, in the celebration of rites that deeply concern the Christian's sacramental life and the choices confronting him,(32) as also in the joyful or sad experiences of his life on earth.(33)

13. The Liturgy of the Hours, the revised book of the Office, also contains outstanding examples of devotion to the Mother of the Lord. These are to be found in the hymns-which include several masterpieces of universal literature, such as Dante's sublime prayer to the Blessed Virgin(34)-and in the antiphons that complete the daily Office. To these lyrical invocations there has been added the well-known prayer *Sub tuum praesidium*, venerable for its antiquity and admirable for its content. Other examples occur in the prayers of intercession at Lauds and Vespers, prayers which frequently express trusting recourse to the Mother of mercy. Finally there are selections from the vast treasury of writings on our Lady composed by authors of the first Christian centuries, of the Middle Ages and of modern times.

14. The commemoration of the Blessed Virgin occurs often in the Missal, the Lectionary and the Liturgy of the Hours-the hinges of the liturgical prayer of the Roman Rite. In the other revised liturgical books also expressions of love and suppliant veneration addressed to the Theotokos are not lacking. Thus the Church invokes her, the Mother of grace, before immersing candidates in the saving waters of baptism(35); the Church invokes her intercession for mothers who, full of gratitude for the gift of motherhood, come to church to express their joy(36); the Church holds her up as a model to those who follow Christ by embracing the religious life(37) or who receive the Consecration of Virgins.(38) For these people the Church asks Mary's motherly assistance.(39) The Church prays fervently to Mary on behalf of her children who have come to the hour of their death.(40) The Church asks Mary's intercession for those who have closed their eyes to the light of this world and appeared before Christ, the eternal Light";(41) and the Church, through Mary's prayers, invokes comfort upon those who in sorrow mourn with faith the departure of their loved ones.(42)

15. The examination of the revised liturgical books leads us to the comforting observation that the postconciliar renewal has, as was previously desired by the liturgical movement, properly considered the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of Christ, and, in harmony with tradition, has recognized the singular place that belongs to her in Christian worship as the holy Mother of God and the worthy Associate of the Redeemer.

It could not have been otherwise. If one studies the history of Christian worship, in fact, one notes that both in the East and in the West the highest and purest expressions of devotion to the Blessed Virgin have sprung from the liturgy or have been incorporated into it.

We wish to emphasize the fact that the veneration which the universal Church today accords to blessed Mary is a derivation from and an extension and unceasing increase of the devotion that the Church of every age has paid to her, with careful attention to truth and with an ever watchful nobility of expression.

From perennial Tradition kept alive by reason of the uninterrupted presence of the Spirit and continual attention to the Word, the Church of our time draws motives, arguments and incentives for the veneration that she pays to the Blessed Virgin. And the liturgy, which receives approval and strength from the magisterium, is a most lofty expression and an evident proof of this living Tradition.

Section Two

The Blessed Virgin as the Model of the Church in Divine Worship

16. In accordance with some of the guidelines of the Council's teaching on Mary and the Church, we now wish to examine more closely a particular aspect of the relationship between Mary and the liturgy—namely, Mary as a model of the spiritual attitude with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries. That the Blessed virgin is an exemplar in this field derives from the fact that she is recognized as a most excellent exemplar of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ,(43) that is, of that interior disposition with which the Church, the beloved spouse, closely associated with her Lord, invokes Christ and through Him worships the eternal Father.(44)

17. Mary is the attentive Virgin, who receives the word of God with faith, that faith which in her case was the gateway and path to divine motherhood, for, as Saint Augustine realized, "Blessed Mary by believing conceived Him (Jesus) whom believing she brought forth."(45) In fact, when she received from the angel the answer to her doubt (cf. Lk. 1:34-37), "full of faith, and conceiving Christ in her mind before conceiving Him in her womb, she said, 'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me' (Lk. 1:38)."(46) It was faith that was for her the cause of blessedness and certainty in the fulfillment of his promise: "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk. 1:45). Similarly, it was faith with which she, who played a part in the Incarnation and was a unique witness to it, thinking back on the events of the infancy of Christ, meditated upon these events in her heart (cf. Lk. 2:19,51). The Church also acts in this way, especially in the liturgy, when with faith she listens, accepts, proclaims and venerates the word of God, distributes it to the faithful as the bread of life(47) and in the light of that word examines the signs of the times and interprets and lives the events of history.

18. Mary is also the Virgin in prayer. She appears as such in the visit to the mother of the precursor, when she pours out her soul in expressions glorifying God, and expressions of humility, faith and hope. This prayer is the Magnificat (cf. Lk. 1:46-55), Mary's prayer par excellence, the song of the messianic times in which there mingles the joy of the ancient and the new Israel. As St. Irenaeus seems to suggest, it is in Mary's canticle that there was heard once more the rejoicing of Abraham who foresaw the Messiah (cf. Jn. 8:56)(48) and there rang out in prophetic anticipation the voice of the Church: "In her exultation Mary prophetically declared in the name of the Church: 'My soul proclaims the glory of the Lord....'"(49) And in fact Mary's hymn has spread far and wide and has become the prayer of the whole Church in all ages.

At Cana, Mary appears once more as the Virgin in prayer: when she tactfully told her Son of a temporal need she also obtained an effect of grace, namely, that Jesus, in working the first of His "signs," confirmed His disciples' faith in Him (cf. Jn. 2:1-12).

Likewise, the last description of Mary's life presents her as praying. The apostles "joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14). We have here the prayerful presence of Mary in the early Church and in the Church throughout all ages, for, having been assumed into heaven, she has not abandoned her mission of intercession and salvation.(50) The title Virgin in prayer also fits the Church, which day by day presents to the Father the needs of her children, "praises the Lord unceasingly and intercedes for the salvation of the world."(51)

19. Mary is also the Virgin-Mother—she who "believing and obeying...brought forth on earth the Father's Son. This she did, not knowing man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit."(52) This was a miraculous

motherhood, set up by God as the type and exemplar of the fruitfulness of the Virgin-Church, which "becomes herself a mother.... For by her preaching and by baptism she brings forth to a new and immortal life children who are conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of God."(53) The ancient Fathers rightly taught that the Church prolongs in the sacrament of Baptism the virginal motherhood of Mary. Among such references we like to recall that of our illustrious predecessor, Saint Leo the Great, who in a Christmas homily says: "The origin which (Christ took in the womb of the Virgin He has given to the baptismal font: He has given to water what He had given to His Mother-the power of the Most High and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (cf Lk. 1:35), which was responsible for Mary's bringing forth the Savior, has the same effect, so that water may regenerate the believer."(54) If we wished to go to liturgical sources, we could quote the beautiful *Illatio* of the Mozarabic liturgy: "The former [Mary] carried Life in her womb; the latter [the Church] bears Life in the waters of baptism. In Mary's members Christ was formed; in the waters of the Church Christ is put on."(55)

20. Mary is, finally, the Virgin presenting offerings. In the episode of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (cf. Lk. 2:22-35), the Church, guided by the Spirit, has detected, over and above the fulfillment of the laws regarding the offering of the firstborn (cf. Ex. 13:11-16) and the purification of the mother (cf. Lv. 12:6-8), a mystery of salvation related to the history of salvation. That is, she has noted the continuity of the fundamental offering that the Incarnate Word made to the Father when He entered the world (cf. Heb. 15:5-7). The Church has seen the universal nature of salvation proclaimed, for Simeon, greeting in the Child the light to enlighten the peoples and the glory of the people Israel (cf. Lk. 2:32), recognized in Him the Messiah, the Savior of all. The Church has understood the prophetic reference to the Passion of Christ: the fact that Simeon's words, which linked in one prophecy the Son as "the sign of contradiction" (Lk. 2:34) and the Mother, whose soul would be pierced by a sword (cf Lk. 2:35), came true on Calvary. A mystery of salvation, therefore, that in its various aspects orients the episode of the Presentation in the Temple to the salvific event of the cross. But the Church herself, in particular from the Middle Ages onwards, has detected in the heart of the Virgin taking her Son to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (cf. Lk. 2:22) a desire to make an offering, a desire that exceeds the ordinary meaning of the rite. A witness to this intuition is found in the loving prayer of Saint Bernard "Offer your Son, holy Virgin, and present to the Lord the blessed fruit of your womb. Offer for the reconciliation of us all the holy Victim which is pleasing to God."(56)

This union of the Mother and the Son in the work of redemption(57) reaches its climax on Calvary, where Christ "offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God" (Heb. 9:14) and where Mary stood by the cross (cf. Jn 19:25), "suffering grievously with her only-begotten Son. There she united herself with a maternal heart to His sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this victim which she herself had brought forth"(58) and also was offering to the eternal Father."(59) To perpetuate down the centuries the Sacrifice of the Cross, the divine Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice, the memorial of His death and resurrection, and entrusted it to His spouse the Church,(60) which, especially on Sundays, calls the faithful together to celebrate the Passover of the Lord until He comes again.(61) This the Church does in union with the saints in heaven and in particular with the Blessed Virgin,(62) whose burning charity and unshakable faith she imitates.

21. Mary is not only an example for the whole Church in the exercise of divine worship but is also, clearly, a teacher of the spiritual life for individual Christians. The faithful at a very early date began to look to Mary and to imitate her in making their lives an act of worship of God and making their worship a commitment of their lives. As early as the fourth century, St. Ambrose, speaking to the people, expressed the hope that each of them would have the spirit of Mary in order to glory God May the heart of Mary be in each Christian to proclaim the greatness of the Lord; may her spirit be in everyone to exult in God."(63) But Mary is above all the example of that worship that consists in making one's life an offering to God. This is an ancient and ever new doctrine that each individual can hear again by heeding the Church's teaching, but also by heeding the very voice of the Virgin as she, anticipating in herself the wonderful petition of the Lord's Prayer-"Your will be done" (Mt. 6:10)-replied to God's messenger: "I am

the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me" (Lk. 1:38). And Mary's "yes" is for all Christians a lesson and example of obedience to the will of the Father, which is the way and means of one's own sanctification.

22. It is also important to note how the Church expresses in various effective attitudes of devotion the many relationships that bind her to Mary: in profound veneration, when she reflects on the singular dignity of the Virgin who, through the action of the Holy Spirit has become Mother of the Incarnate Word; in burning love, when she considers the spiritual motherhood of Mary towards all members of the Mystical Body; in trusting invocation; when she experiences the intercession of her advocate and helper;(64) in loving service, when she sees in the humble handmaid of the Lord the queen of mercy and the mother of grace; in zealous imitation, when she contemplates the holiness and virtues of her who is "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28); in profound wonder, when she sees in her, "as in a faultless model, that which she herself wholly desires and hopes to be"(65); in attentive study, when she recognizes in the associate of the Redeemer, who already shares fully in the fruits of the Paschal Mystery, the prophetic fulfillment of her own future, until the day on which, when she has been purified of every spot and wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), she will become like a bride arrayed for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 21:2).

23. Therefore, venerable Brothers, as we consider the piety that the liturgical Tradition of the universal Church and the renewed Roman Rite expresses towards the holy Mother of God, and as we remember that the liturgy through its pre-eminent value as worship constitutes the golden norm for Christian piety, and finally as we observe how the Church when she celebrates the sacred mysteries assumes an attitude of faith and love similar to that of the Virgin, we realize the rightness of the exhortation that the Second Vatican Council addresses to all the children of the Church, namely "that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin be generously fostered."(66) This is an exhortation that we would like to see accepted everywhere without reservation and put into zealous practice.

PART TWO

The Renewal of Devotion to Mary

24. The Second Vatican Council also exhorts us to promote other forms of piety side by side with liturgical worship, especially those recommended by the magisterium.(67) However, as is well known, the piety of the faithful and their veneration of the Mother of God has taken on many forms according to circumstances of time and place, the different sensibilities of peoples and their different cultural traditions. Hence it is that the forms in which this devotion is expressed, being subject to the ravages of time, show the need for a renewal that will permit them to substitute elements that are transient, to emphasize the elements that are ever new and to incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from theological reflection and the proposals of the Church's magisterium. This shows the need for episcopal conferences, local churches, religious families and Community of the faithful to promote a genuine creative activity and at the same time to proceed to a careful revision of expressions and exercises of piety directed towards the Blessed Virgin. We would like this revision to be respectful of wholesome tradition and open to the legitimate requests of the people of our time. It seems fitting therefore, venerable Brothers, to put forward some principles for action in this field.

Section One

Trinitarian, Christological and Ecclesial Aspects of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

25. In the first place it is supremely fitting that exercises of piety directed towards the Virgin Mary should clearly express the Trinitarian and Christological note that is intrinsic and essential to them. Christian

worship in fact is of itself worship offered to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, or, as the liturgy puts it, to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. From this point of view worship is rightly extended, though in a substantially different way, first and foremost and in a special manner, to the Mother of the Lord and then to the saints, in whom the Church proclaims the Paschal Mystery, for they have suffered with Christ and have been glorified with Him.(68) In the Virgin Mary everything is relative to Christ and dependent upon Him. It was with a view to Christ that God the Father from all eternity chose her to be the all-holy Mother and adorned her with gifts of the Spirit granted to no one else. Certainly genuine Christian piety has never failed to highlight the indissoluble link and essential relationship of the Virgin to the divine Savior.(69) Yet it seems to us particularly in conformity with the spiritual orientation of our time, which is dominated and absorbed by the "question of Christ,"(70) that in the expressions of devotion to the Virgin the Christological aspect should have particular prominence. It likewise seems to us fitting that these expressions of devotion should reflect God's plan, which laid down "with one single decree the origin of Mary and the Incarnation of the divine Wisdom."(71) This will without doubt contribute to making piety towards the Mother of Jesus more solid, and to making it an effective instrument for attaining to full "knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself" (Eph. 4:13). It will also contribute to increasing the worship due to Christ Himself, since, according to the perennial mind of the Church authoritatively repeated in our own day,(72) "what is given to the handmaid is referred to the Lord; thus what is given to the Mother redounds to the Son; ...and thus what is given as humble tribute to the Queen becomes honor rendered to the King."(73)

26. It seems to us useful to add to this mention of the Christological orientation of devotion to the Blessed Virgin a reminder of the fittingness of giving prominence in this devotion to one of the essential facts of the Faith: the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Theological reflection and the liturgy have in fact noted how the sanctifying intervention of the Spirit in the Virgin of Nazareth was a culminating moment of the Spirit's action in the history of salvation. Thus, for example, some Fathers and writers of the Church attributed to the work of the Spirit the original holiness of Mary, who was as it were "fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new substance and new creature."(74) Reflecting on the Gospel texts-"The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with his shadow" (Lk. 1:35) and "[Mary] was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.... She has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:18, 20)-they saw in the Spirit's intervention an action that consecrated and made fruitful Mary's virginity(75) and transformed her into the "Abode of the King" or "Bridal Chamber of the Word,"(76) the "Temple" or "Tabernacle of the Lord,"(77) the "Ark of the Covenant" or "the Ark of Holiness,"(78) titles rich in biblical echoes. Examining more deeply still the mystery of the Incarnation, they saw in the mysterious relationship between the Spirit and Mary an aspect redolent of marriage, poetically portrayed by Prudentius: "The unwed Virgin espoused the Spirit,"(79) and they called her the "Temple of the Holy Spirit,"(80) an expression that emphasizes the sacred character of the Virgin, now the permanent dwelling of the Spirit of God. Delving deeply into the doctrine of the Paraclete, they saw that from Him as from a spring there flowed forth the fullness of grace (cf. Lk. 1:28) and the abundance of gifts that adorned her. Thus they attributed to the Spirit the faith, hope and charity that animated the Virgin's heart, the strength that sustained her acceptance of the will of God, and the vigor that upheld her in her suffering at the foot of the cross.(81) In Mary's prophetic canticle (cf. Lk. 1:46-55) they saw a special working of the Spirit who had spoken through the mouths of the prophets.(82) Considering, finally, the presence of the Mother of Jesus in the Upper Room, where the Spirit came down upon the infant Church (cf. Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4), they enriched with new developments the ancient theme of Mary and the Church.(83) Above all they had recourse to the Virgin's intercession in order to obtain from the Spirit the capacity for engendering Christ in their own soul, as is attested to by Saint Ildephonsus in a prayer of supplication, amazing in its doctrine and prayerful power: "I beg you, holy Virgin, that I may have Jesus from the Holy Spirit, by whom you brought Jesus forth. May my soul receive Jesus through the Holy Spirit by whom your flesh conceived Jesus.... May I love Jesus in the Holy Spirit in whom you adore Jesus as Lord and gaze upon Him as your Son."(84)

27. It is sometimes said that many spiritual writings today do not sufficiently reflect the whole doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. It is the task of specialists to verify and weigh the truth of this assertion, but it is our task to exhort everyone, especially those in the pastoral ministry and also theologians, to meditate more deeply on the working of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation, and to ensure that Christian spiritual writings give due prominence to His life-giving action. Such a study will bring out in particular the hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth, and show the influence they exert on the Church. From a more profound meditation on the truths of the Faith will flow a more vital piety.

28. It is also necessary that exercises of piety with which the faithful honor the Mother of the Lord should clearly show the place she occupies in the Church: "the highest place and the closest to us after Christ."(85) The liturgical buildings of Byzantine rite, both in the architectural structure itself and in the use of images, show clearly Mary's place in the Church. On the central door of the iconostasis there is a representation of the Annunciation and in the apse an image of the glorious Theotokos. In this way one perceives how through the assent of the humble handmaid of the Lord mankind begins its return to God and sees in the glory of the all-holy Virgin the goal towards which it is journeying. The symbolism by which a church building demonstrates Mary's place in the mystery of the Church is full of significance and gives grounds for hoping that the different forms of devotion to the Blessed Virgin may everywhere be open to ecclesial perspectives.

The faithful will be able to appreciate more easily Mary's mission in the mystery of the Church and her preeminent place in the communion of saints if attention is drawn to the Second Vatican Council's references to the fundamental concepts of the nature of the Church as the Family of God, the People of God, the Kingdom of God and the Mystical Body of Christ.(86) This will also bring the faithful to a deeper realization of the brotherhood which unites all of them as sons and daughters of the Virgin Mary, "who with a mother's love has cooperated in their rebirth and spiritual formation,"(87) and as sons and daughters of the Church, since "we are born from the Church's womb we are nurtured by the Church's milk, we are given life by the Church's Spirit."(88) They will also realize that both the Church and Mary collaborate to give birth to the Mystical Body of Christ since "both of them are the Mother of Christ, but neither brings forth the whole (body) independently of the other."(89) Similarly the faithful will appreciate more clearly that the action of the Church in the world can be likened to an extension of Mary's concern. The active love she showed at Nazareth, in the house of Elizabeth, at Cana and on Golgotha - all salvific episodes having vast ecclesial importance - finds its extension in the Church's maternal concern that all men should come to knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tm. 2:4), in the Church's concern for people in lowly circumstances and for the poor and weak, and in her constant commitment to peace and social harmony, as well as in her untiring efforts to ensure that all men will share in the salvation which was merited for them by Christ's death. Thus love for the Church will become love for Mary, and vice versa, since the one cannot exist without the other, as St. Chromatius of Aquileia observed with keen discernment: "The Church was united... in the Upper Room with Mary the Mother of Jesus and with His brethren. The Church therefore cannot be referred to as such unless it includes Mary the Mother of our Lord, together with His brethren."(90) In conclusion, therefore, we repeat that devotion to the Blessed Virgin must explicitly show its intrinsic and ecclesiological content: thus it will be enabled to revise its forms and texts in a fitting way.

Section Two

*Four Guidelines for Devotion to the Blessed Virgin:
Biblical, Liturgical, Ecumenical and Anthropological*

29. The above considerations spring from an examination of the Virgin Mary's relationship with God-the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit-and with the Church. Following the path traced by conciliar teaching,(91) we wish to add some further guidelines from Scripture, liturgy, ecumenism and

anthropology. These are to be borne in mind in any revision of exercises of piety or in the creation of new ones, in order to emphasize and accentuate the bond which unites us to her who is the Mother of Christ and our Mother in the communion of saints.

30. Today it is recognized as a general need of Christian piety that every form of worship should have a biblical imprint. The progress made in biblical studies, the increasing dissemination of the Sacred Scriptures, and above all the example of Tradition and the interior action of the Holy Spirit are tending to cause the modern Christian to use the Bible ever increasingly as the basic prayerbook, and to draw from it genuine inspiration and unsurpassable examples. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin cannot be exempt from this general orientation of Christian piety(92); indeed it should draw inspiration in a special way from this orientation in order to gain new vigor and sure help. In its wonderful presentation of God's plan for man's salvation, the Bible is replete with the mystery of the Savior, and from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, also contains clear references to her who was the Mother and associate of the Savior. We would not, however, wish this biblical imprint to be merely a diligent use of texts and symbols skillfully selected from the Sacred Scriptures. More than this is necessary. What is needed is that texts of prayers and chants should draw their inspiration and their wording from the Bible, and above all that devotion to the Virgin should be imbued with the great themes of the Christian message. This will ensure that, as they venerate the Seat of Wisdom, the faithful in their turn will be enlightened by the divine word, and be inspired to live their lives in accordance with the precepts of Incarnate Wisdom.

31. We have already spoken of the veneration which the Church gives to the Mother of God in the celebration of the sacred liturgy. However, speaking of the other forms of devotion and of the criteria on which they should be based we wish to recall the norm laid down in the Constitution [*Sacrosanctum concilium*](#). This document, while wholeheartedly approving of the practices of piety of the Christian people, goes on to say: "...it is necessary however that such devotions with consideration for the liturgical seasons should be so arranged as to be in harmony with the sacred liturgy. They should somehow derive their inspiration from it, and because of its pre-eminence they should orient the Christian people towards it."(93) Although this is a wise and clear rule, its application is not an easy matter, especially in regard to Marian devotions, which are so varied in their formal expressions. What is needed on the part of the leaders of the local communities is effort, pastoral sensitivity and perseverance, while the faithful on their part must show a willingness to accept guidelines and ideas drawn from the true nature of Christian worship; this sometimes makes it necessary to change long-standing customs wherein the real nature of this Christian worship has become somewhat obscured.

In this context we wish to mention two attitudes which in pastoral practice could nullify the norm of the Second Vatican Council. In the first place there are certain persons concerned with the care of souls who scorn a priori, devotions of piety which, in their correct forms have been recommended by the magisterium, who leave them aside and in this way create a vacuum which they do not fill. They forget that the Council has said that devotions of piety should harmonize with the liturgy, not be suppressed. Secondly there are those who, without wholesome liturgical and pastoral criteria, mix practices of piety and liturgical acts in hybrid celebrations. It sometimes happens that novenas or similar practices of piety are inserted into the very celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This creates the danger that the Lord's Memorial Rite, instead of being the culmination of the meeting of the Christian community, becomes the occasion, as it were, for devotional practices. For those who act in this way we wish to recall the rule laid down by the Council prescribing that exercises of piety should be harmonized with the liturgy not merged into it. Wise pastoral action should, on the one hand, point out and emphasize the proper nature of the liturgical acts, while on the other hand it should enhance the value of practices of piety in order to adapt them to the needs of individual communities in the Church and to make them valuable aids to the liturgy.

32. Because of its ecclesial character, devotion to the Blessed Virgin reflects the preoccupations of the Church herself. Among these especially in our day is her anxiety for the re-establishment of Christian

unity. In this way devotion to the Mother of the Lord is in accord with the deep desires and aims of the ecumenical movement, that is, it acquires an ecumenical aspect. This is so for a number of reasons.

In the first place, in venerating with particular love the glorious Theotokos and in acclaiming her as the "Hope of Christians,"(94) Catholics unite themselves with their brethren of the Orthodox Churches, in which devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds its expression in a beautiful lyricism and in solid doctrine. Catholics are also united with Anglicans, whose classical theologians have already drawn attention to the sound scriptural basis for devotion to the Mother of our Lord, while those of the present day increasingly underline the importance of Mary's place in the Christian life. Praising God with the very words of the Virgin (cf. Lk. 1:46-55), they are united, too, with their brethren in the Churches of the Reform, where love for the Sacred Scriptures flourishes.

For Catholics, devotion to the Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians is also a natural and frequent opportunity for seeking her intercession with her Son in order to obtain the union of all the baptized within a single People of God.(95) Yet again, the ecumenical aspect of Marian devotion is shown in the Catholic Church's desire that, without in any way detracting from the unique character of this devotion,(96) every care should be taken to avoid any exaggeration which could mislead other Christian brethren about the true doctrine of the Catholic Church.(97) Similarly, the Church desires that any manifestation of cult which is opposed to correct Catholic practice should be eliminated.

Finally, since it is natural that in true devotion to the Blessed Virgin "the Son should be duly known, loved and glorified...when the Mother is honored,"(98) such devotion is an approach to Christ, the source and center of ecclesiastical communion, in which all who openly confess that He is God and Lord, Savior and sole Mediator (cf. 1 Tm. 2:5) are called to be one, with one another, with Christ and with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.(99)

33. We realize that there exist important differences between the thought of many of our brethren in other Churches and ecclesial communities and the Catholic doctrine on "Mary's role in the work of salvation."(100) In consequence there are likewise differences of opinion on the devotion which should be shown to her. Nevertheless, since it is the same power of the Most High which overshadowed the Virgin of Nazareth (cf Lk. 1:35) and which today is at work within the ecumenical movement and making it fruitful, we wish to express our confidence that devotion to the humble handmaid of the Lord, in Whom the Almighty has done great things (cf. Lk. 1:49), will become, even if only slowly, not an obstacle but a path and a rallying point for the union of all who believe in Christ. We are glad to see that, in fact, a better understanding of Mary's place in the mystery of Christ and of the Church on the part also of our separated brethren is smoothing the path to union. Just as at Cana the Blessed Virgin's intervention resulted in Christ's performing His first miracle (cf. Jn. 2:1-12), so today her intercession can help to bring to realization the time when the disciples of Christ will again find full communion in faith. This hope of ours is strengthened by a remark of our predecessor Leo XIII, who wrote that the cause of Christian unity "properly pertains to the role of Mary's spiritual motherhood. For Mary did not and cannot engender those who belong to Christ, except in one faith and one love: for 'Is Christ divided?' (1 Cor. 1:13) We must all live together the life of Christ, so that in one and the same body 'we may bear fruit for God' (Rom. 7:4)."(101)

34. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin must also pay close attention to certain findings of the human sciences. This will help to eliminate one of the causes of the difficulties experienced in devotion to the Mother of the Lord, namely, the discrepancy existing between some aspects of this devotion and modern anthropological discoveries and the profound changes which have occurred in the psycho-sociological field in which modern man lives and works. The picture of the Blessed Virgin presented in a certain type of devotional literature cannot easily be reconciled with today's life-style, especially the way women live today. In the home, woman's equality and corresponsibility with man in the running of the family are being justly recognized by laws and the evolution of customs. In the sphere of politics women have in

many countries gained a position in public life equal to that of men. In the social field women are at work in a whole range of different employments, getting further away every day from the restricted surroundings of the home. In the cultural field new possibilities are opening up for women in scientific research and intellectual activities.

In consequence of these phenomena some people are becoming disenchanted with devotion to the Blessed Virgin and finding it difficult to take as an example Mary of Nazareth because the horizons of her life, so they say, seem rather restricted in comparison with the vast spheres of activity open to mankind today. In this regard we exhort theologians, those responsible for the local Christian communities and the faithful themselves to examine these difficulties with due care. At the same time we wish to take the opportunity of offering our own contribution to their solution by making a few observations.

35. First, the Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated, not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived and which today scarcely exists anywhere. She is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which, in her own particular life, she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Lk. 1:38), because she heard the word of God and acted on it, and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.

36. Secondly, we would like to point out that the difficulties alluded to above are closely related to certain aspects of the image of Mary found in popular writings. They are not connected with the Gospel image of Mary nor with the doctrinal data which have been made explicit through a slow and conscientious process of drawing from Revelation. It should be considered quite normal for succeeding generations of Christians in differing sociocultural contexts to have expressed their sentiments about the Mother of Jesus in a way and manner which reflected their own age. In contemplating Mary and her mission these different generations of Christians, looking on her as the New Woman and perfect Christian, found in her as a virgin, wife and mother the outstanding type of womanhood and the preeminent exemplar of life lived in accordance with the Gospels and summing up the most characteristic situations in the life of a woman. When the Church considers the long history of Marian devotion she rejoices at the continuity of the element of cult which it shows, but she does not bind herself to any particular expression of an individual cultural epoch or to the particular anthropological ideas underlying such expressions. The Church understands that certain outward religious expressions, while perfectly valid in themselves, may be less suitable to men and women of different ages and cultures.

37. Finally, we wish to point out that our own time, no less than former times, is called upon to verify its knowledge of reality with the word of God, and, keeping to the matter at present under consideration, to compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time. Thus, the modern woman, anxious to participate with decision-making power in the affairs of the community, will contemplate with intimate joy Mary who, taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent,(102) not to the solution of a contingent problem, but to that "event of world importance," as the Incarnation of the Word has been rightly called.(103) The modern woman will appreciate that Mary's choice of the state of virginity, which in God's plan prepared her for the mystery of the Incarnation, was not a rejection of any of the values of the married state but a courageous choice which she made in order to consecrate herself totally to the love of God. The modern woman will note with pleasant surprise that Mary of Nazareth, while completely devoted to the will of God, was far from being a timidly submissive woman or one whose piety was repellent to others; on the contrary, she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and the oppressed, and removes the powerful people of this world from their privileged

positions (cf Lk. 1:51-53). The modern woman will recognize in Mary, who "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord,"(104) a woman of strength, who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and exile (cf. Mt. 2:13-23). These are situations that cannot escape the attention of those who wish to support, with the Gospel spirit, the liberating energies of man and of society. And Mary will appear not as a Mother exclusively concerned with her own divine Son, but rather as a woman whose action helped to strengthen the apostolic community's faith in Christ (cf. Jn. 2:1-12), and whose maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary.(105) These are but examples, but examples which show clearly that the figure of the Blessed Virgin does not disillusion any of the profound expectations of the men and women of our time but offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city; the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts.

38. Having offered these directives, which are intended to favor the harmonious development of devotion to the Mother of the Lord, we consider it opportune to draw attention to certain attitudes of piety which are incorrect. The Second Vatican Council has already authoritatively denounced both the exaggeration of content and form which even falsifies doctrine and likewise the small-mindedness which obscures the figure and mission of Mary. The Council has also denounced certain devotional deviations, such as vain credulity, which substitutes reliance on merely external practices for serious commitment. Another deviation is sterile and ephemeral sentimentality, so alien to the spirit of the Gospel that demands persevering and practical action.(106) We reaffirm the Council's reprobation of such attitudes and practices. They are not in harmony with the Catholic Faith and therefore they must have no place in Catholic worship. Careful defense against these errors and deviations will render devotion to the Blessed Virgin more vigorous and more authentic. It will make this devotion solidly based, with the consequence that study of the sources of Revelation and attention to the documents of the magisterium will prevail over the exaggerated search for novelties or extraordinary phenomena. It will ensure that this devotion is objective in its historical seeing, and for this reason everything that is obviously legendary or false must be eliminated. It will ensure that this devotion matches its doctrinal content-hence the necessity of avoiding a one-sided presentation of the figure of Mary, which by overstressing one element compromises the overall picture given by the Gospel. It will make this devotion clear in its motivation; hence every unworthy self-interest is to be carefully banned from the area of what is sacred.

39. Finally, insofar as it may be necessary we would like to repeat that the ultimate purpose of devotion to the Blessed Virgin is to glorify God and to lead Christians to commit themselves to a life which is in absolute conformity with His will. When the children of the Church unite their voices with the voice of the unknown woman in the Gospel and glorify the Mother of Jesus by saying to Him: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked" (Lk. 11:27), they will be led to ponder the Divine Master's serious reply: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Lk. 11:28) While it is true that this reply is in itself lively praise of Mary, as various Fathers of the Church interpreted it(107) and the Second Vatican Council has confirmed,(108) it is also an admonition to us to live our lives in accordance with God's commandments. It is also an echo of other words of the Savior: "Not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21); and again: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (Jn. 15:14).

PART THREE

*Observations on Two Exercises of Piety:
The Angelus and the Rosary*

40. We have indicated a number of principles which can help to give fresh vigor to devotion to the Mother of the Lord. It is now up to episcopal conferences, to those in charge of local communities and to the various religious congregations prudently to revise practices and exercises of piety in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and to encourage the creative impulse of those who through genuine religious inspiration or pastoral sensitivity wish to establish new forms of piety. For different reasons we nevertheless feel it is opportune to consider here two practices which are widespread in the West, and with which this Apostolic See has concerned itself on various occasions: the Angelus and the Rosary.

The Angelus

41. What we have to say about the Angelus is meant to be only a simple but earnest exhortation to continue its traditional recitation wherever and whenever possible. The Angelus does not need to be revised, because of its simple structure, its biblical character, its historical origin which links it to the prayer for peace and safety, and its quasi-liturgical rhythm which sanctifies different moments during the day, and because it reminds us of the Paschal Mystery, in which recalling the Incarnation of the Son of God we pray that we may be led "through his passion and cross to the glory of his resurrection."(109) These factors ensure that the Angelus despite the passing of centuries retains an unaltered value and an intact freshness. It is true that certain customs traditionally linked with the recitation of the Angelus have disappeared or can continue only with difficulty in modern life. But these are marginal elements. The value of contemplation on the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, of the greeting to the Virgin, and of recourse to her merciful intercession remains unchanged. And despite the changed conditions of the times, for the majority of people there remain unaltered the characteristic periods of the day-morning, noon and evening-which mark the periods of their activity and constitute an invitation to pause in prayer.

The Rosary

42. We wish now, venerable Brothers, to dwell for a moment on the renewal of the pious practice which has been called "the compendium of the entire Gospel"(110): the Rosary. To this our predecessors have devoted close attention and care. On many occasions they have recommended its frequent recitation, encouraged its diffusion, explained its nature, recognized its suitability for fostering contemplative prayer-prayer of both praise and petition-and recalled its intrinsic effectiveness for promoting Christian life and apostolic commitment.

We, too, from the first general audience of our pontificate on July 13, 1963, have shown our great esteem for the pious practice of the Rosary.(111) Since that time we have underlined its value on many different occasions, some ordinary, some grave. Thus, at a moment of anguish and uncertainty, we published the Letter *Christi Matri* (September 15, 1966), in order to obtain prayers to Our Lady of the Rosary and to implore from God the supreme benefit of peace.(112) "We renewed this appeal in our Apostolic Exhortation *Recurrere mensis October* (October 7 1969), in which we also commemorated the fourth centenary of the Apostolic Letter *Consueverunt Romani pontifices* of our predecessor Saint Pius V, who in that document explained and in a certain sense established the traditional form of the Rosary.(113)

43. Our assiduous and affectionate interest in the Rosary has led us to follow very attentively the numerous meetings which in recent years have been devoted to the pastoral role of the Rosary in the modern world, meetings arranged by associations and individuals profoundly attached to the Rosary and attended by bishops, priests, religious and lay people of proven experience and recognized ecclesial awareness. Among these people special mention should be made of the sons of Saint Dominic, by tradition the guardians and promoters of this very salutary practice. Parallel with such meetings has been the research work of historians, work aimed not at defining in a sort of archaeological fashion the primitive form of the Rosary but at uncovering the original inspiration and driving force behind it and its essential structure. The fundamental characteristics of the Rosary, its essential elements and their mutual relationship have all emerged more clearly from these congresses and from the research carried out.

44. Thus, for instance, the Gospel inspiration of the Rosary has appeared more clearly: the Rosary draws from the Gospel the presentation of the mysteries and its main formulas. As it moves from the angel's joyful greeting and the Virgin's pious assent, the Rosary takes its inspiration from the Gospel to suggest the attitude with which the faithful should recite it. In the harmonious succession of Hail Mary's the Rosary puts before us once more a fundamental mystery of the Gospel-the Incarnation of the Word, contemplated at the decisive moment of the Annunciation to Mary. The Rosary is thus a Gospel prayer, as pastors and scholars like to define it, more today perhaps than in the past.

45. It has also been more easily seen how the orderly and gradual unfolding of the Rosary reflects the very way in which the Word of God, mercifully entering into human affairs, brought about the Redemption. The Rosary considers in harmonious succession the principal salvific events accomplished in Christ, from His virginal conception and the mysteries of His childhood to the culminating moments of the Passover-the blessed passion and the glorious resurrection-and to the effects of this on the infant Church on the day of Pentecost, and on the Virgin Mary when at the end of her earthly life she was assumed body and soul into her heavenly home. It has also been observed that the division of the mysteries of the Rosary into three parts not only adheres strictly to the chronological order of the facts but above all reflects the plan of the original proclamation of the Faith and sets forth once more the mystery of Christ in the very way in which it is seen by Saint Paul in the celebrated "hymn" of the Letter to the Philippians-kenosis, death and exaltation (cf 2:6-11).

46. As a Gospel prayer, centered on the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation. Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany-like succession of Hail Mary's, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the angel's announcement and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk. 1:42). We would go further and say that the succession of Hail Mary's constitutes the warp on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries. The Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus whom the succession of the mysteries proposes to us-now as the Son of God, now as the Son of the Virgin-at His birth in a stable at Bethlehem, at His presentation by His Mother in the Temple, as a youth full of zeal for His Father's affairs, as the Redeemer in agony in the garden, scourged and crowned with thorns, carrying the cross and dying on Calvary, risen from the dead and ascended to the glory of the Father to send forth the gift of the Spirit. As is well known, at one time there was a custom, still preserved in certain places, of adding to the name of Jesus in each Hail Mary reference to the mystery being contemplated. And this was done precisely in order to help contemplation and to make the mind and the voice act in unison.

47. There has also been felt with greater urgency the need to point out once more the importance of a further essential element in the Rosary, in addition to the value of the elements of praise and petition, namely the element of contemplation. Without this the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation is in danger of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas and of going counter to the warning of Christ: "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Mt. 6:7). By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are unfolded.

48. Finally, as a result of modern reflection the relationships between the liturgy and the Rosary have been more clearly understood. On the one hand it has been emphasized that the Rosary is, as it were, a branch sprung from the ancient trunk of the Christian liturgy, the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin, whereby the humble were associated in the Church's hymn of praise and universal intercession. On the other hand it has been noted that this development occurred at a time-the last period of the Middle Ages-when the liturgical spirit was in decline and the faithful were turning from the liturgy towards a devotion to Christ's humanity and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, a devotion favoring a certain external sentiment of piety. Not

many years ago some people began to express the desire to see the Rosary included among the rites of the liturgy, while other people, anxious to avoid repetition of former pastoral mistakes, unjustifiably disregarded the Rosary. Today the problem can easily be solved in the light of the principles of the Constitution *Sacrosanctum concilium*. Liturgical celebrations and the pious practice of the Rosary must be neither set in opposition to one another nor considered as being identical.(114) The more an expression of prayer preserves its own true nature and individual characteristics the more fruitful it becomes. Once the pre-eminent value of liturgical rites has been reaffirmed it will not be difficult to appreciate the fact that the Rosary is a practice of piety which easily harmonizes with the liturgy. In fact, like the liturgy, it is of a community nature, draws its inspiration from Sacred Scripture and is oriented towards the mystery of Christ. The commemoration in the liturgy and the contemplative remembrance proper to the Rosary, although existing on essentially different planes of reality, have as their object the same salvific events wrought by Christ. The former presents new, under the veil of signs and operative in a hidden way, the great mysteries of our Redemption. The latter, by means of devout contemplation, recalls these same mysteries to the mind of the person praying and stimulates the will to draw from them the norms of living. Once this substantial difference has been established, it is not difficult to understand that the Rosary is an exercise of piety that draws its motivating force from the liturgy and leads naturally back to it, if practiced in conformity with its original inspiration.; It does not, however, become part of the liturgy. In fact, meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary, by familiarizing the hearts and minds of the faithful with the mysteries of Christ, can be an excellent preparation for the creation of those same mysteries in the liturgical action and an also become a continuing echo thereof. However, it is a mistake to recite the Rosary during the celebration of the liturgy, though unfortunately this practice still persists here and there.

49. The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the tradition accepted by our predecessor St. Pius V and authoritatively taught by him, consists of various elements disposed in an organic fashion:

a) Contemplation in communion with Mary, of a series of mysteries of salvation, wisely distributed into three cycles. These mysteries express the joy of the messianic times, the salvific suffering of Christ and the glory of the Risen Lord which fills the Church. This contemplation by its very nature encourages practical reflection and provides stimulating norms for living.

b) The Lord's Prayer, or Our Father, which by reason of its immense value is at the basis of Christian prayer and ennobles that prayer in its various expressions.

c) The litany-like succession of the Hail Mary, which is made up of the angel's greeting to the Virgin (cf. Lk. 1:28), and of Elizabeth's greeting (cf. Lk. 1:42), followed by the ecclesial supplication, Holy Mary. The continued series of Hail Mary's is the special characteristic of the Rosary, and their number, in the full and typical number of one hundred and fifty, presents a certain analogy with the Psalter and is an element that goes back to the very origin of the exercise of piety. But this number, divided, according to a well-tried custom, into decades attached to the individual mysteries, is distributed in the three cycles already mentioned, thus giving rise to the Rosary of fifty Hail Mary's as we know it. This latter has entered into use as the normal measure of the pious exercise and as such has been adopted by popular piety and approved by papal authority, which also enriched it with numerous indulgences.

d) The doxology Glory be to the Father which, in conformity with an orientation common to Christian piety concludes the prayer with the glorifying of God who is one and three, from whom, through whom and in whom all things have their being (cf. Rom. 11:36).

50. These are the elements of the Rosary. Each has its own particular character which, wisely understood and appreciated, should be reflected in the recitation in order that the Rosary may express all its richness and variety. Thus the recitation will be grave and suppliant during the Lord's Prayer, lyrical and full of praise during the tranquil succession of Hail Mary's, contemplative in the recollected meditation on the mysteries and full of adoration during the doxology. This applies to all the ways in which the Rosary is

usually recited: privately, in intimate recollection with the Lord; in community, in the family or in groups of the faithful gathered together to ensure the special presence of the Lord (cf. Mt. 18:20); or publicly, in assemblies to which the ecclesial community is invited.

51. In recent times certain exercises of piety have been created which take their inspiration from the Rosary. Among such exercises we wish to draw attention to and recommend those which insert into the ordinary celebration of the word of God some elements of the Rosary, such as meditation on the mysteries and litany-like repetition of the angel's greeting to Mary. In this way these elements gain in importance, since they are found in the context of Bible readings, illustrated with a homily, accompanied by silent pauses and emphasized with song. We are happy to know that such practices have helped to promote a more complete understanding of the spiritual riches of the Rosary itself and have served to restore esteem for its recitation among youth associations and movements.

52. We now desire, as a continuation of the thought of our predecessors, to recommend strongly the recitation of the family Rosary. The Second Vatican Council has pointed out how the family, the primary and vital cell of society, "shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God."(115) The Christian family is thus seen to be a domestic Church"(116) if its members, each according to his proper place and tasks, all together promote justice, practice works of mercy, devote themselves to helping their brethren, take part in the apostolate of the wider local community and play their part in its liturgical worship.(117) This will be all the more true if together they offer up prayers to God. If this element of common prayer were missing, the family would lack its very character as a domestic Church. Thus there must logically follow a concrete effort to reinstate communal prayer in family life if there is to be a restoration of the theological concept of the family as the domestic Church.

53. In accordance with the directives of the Council the *Institutio Generalis de Liturgia Horarum* rightly numbers the family among the groups in which the Divine Office can suitably be celebrated in community: "It is fitting...that the family, as a domestic sanctuary of the Church, should not only offer prayers to God in common, but also, according to circumstances, should recite parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, in order to be more intimately linked with the Church."(118) No avenue should be left unexplored to ensure that this clear and practical recommendation finds within Christian families growing and joyful acceptance.

54. But there is no doubt that, after the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the high point which family prayer can reach, the Rosary should be considered as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite. We like to think, and sincerely hope, that when the family gathering becomes a time of prayer, the Rosary is a frequent and favored manner of praying. We are well aware that the changed conditions of life today do not make family gatherings easy, and that even when such a gathering is possible many circumstances make it difficult to turn it into an occasion of prayer. There is no doubt of the difficulty. But it is characteristic of the Christian in his manner of life not to give in to circumstances but to overcome them, not to succumb but to make an effort. Families which want to live in full measure the vocation and spirituality proper to the Christian family must therefore devote all their energies to overcoming the pressures that hinder family gatherings and prayer in common.

55. In concluding these observations, which give proof of the concern and esteem which the Apostolic See has for the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, we desire at the same time to recommend that this very worthy devotion should not be propagated in a way that is too one-sided or exclusive. The Rosary is an excellent prayer, but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard. They should be drawn to its calm recitation by its intrinsic appeal.

CONCLUSION

Theological and Pastoral Value of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

56. Venerable Brothers, as we come to the end of this our Apostolic Exhortation we wish to sum up and emphasize the theological value of devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to recall briefly its pastoral effectiveness for renewing the Christian way of life.

The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship. The honor which the Church has always and everywhere shown to the Mother of the Lord, from the blessing with which Elizabeth greeted Mary (cf. Lk. 1:42-45) right up to the expressions of praise and petition used today, is a very strong witness to the Church's norm of prayer and an invitation to become more deeply conscious of her norm of faith. And the converse is likewise true. The Church's norm of faith requires that her norm of prayer should everywhere blossom forth with regard to the Mother of Christ. Such devotion to the Blessed Virgin is firmly rooted in the revealed word and has solid dogmatic foundations. It is based on the singular dignity of Mary, "Mother of the Son of God, and therefore beloved daughter of the Father and Temple of the Holy Spirit-Mary, who, because of this extraordinary grace, is far greater than any other creature on earth or in heaven."(119) This devotion takes into account the part she played at decisive moments in the history of the salvation which her Son accomplished, and her holiness, already full at her Immaculate Conception yet increasing all the time as she obeyed the will of the Father and accepted the path of suffering (cf. Lk. 2:34-35, 41-52; Jn. 19:25-27), growing constantly in faith, hope and charity. Devotion to Mary recalls too her mission and the special position she holds within the People of God, of which she is the preeminent member, a shining example and the loving Mother; it recalls her unceasing and efficacious intercession which, although she is assumed into heaven, draws her close to those who ask her help, including those who do not realize that they are her children. It recalls Mary's glory which ennoble the whole of mankind, as the outstanding phrase of Dante recalls: "You have so ennobled human nature that its very Creator did not disdain to share in it."(120) Mary, in fact, is one of our race, a true daughter of Eve-though free of that mother's sin-and truly our sister, who as a poor and humble woman fully shared our lot.

We would add further that devotion to the Blessed Virgin finds its ultimate justification in the unfathomable and free will of God who, being eternal and divine charity (cf. 1 Jn. 4:7-8, 16), accomplishes all things according to a loving design. He loved her and did great things for her (cf. Lk. 1:49). He loved her for His own sake, and He loved her for our sake, too; He gave her to Himself and He gave her also to us.

57. Christ is the only way to the Father (cf. Jn. 14:4-11), and the ultimate example to whom the disciple must conform his own conduct (cf. Jn. 13:15), to the extent of sharing Christ's sentiments (cf. Phil. 2:5), living His life and possessing His Spirit (cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:10-11). The Church has always taught this and nothing in pastoral activity should obscure this doctrine. But the Church, taught by the Holy Spirit and benefiting from centuries of experience, recognizes that devotion to the Blessed Virgin, subordinated to worship of the divine Savior and in connection with it, also has a great pastoral effectiveness and constitutes a force for renewing Christian living. It is easy to see the reason for this effectiveness Mary's many-sided mission to the People of God is a super natural reality which operates and bears fruit within the body of the Church. One finds cause for joy in considering the different aspects of this mission, and seeing how each of these aspects with its individual effectiveness is directed towards the same end, namely, producing in the children the spiritual characteristics of the first-born Son. The Virgin's maternal intercession, her exemplary holiness and the divine grace which is in her become for the human race a reason for divine hope.

The Blessed Virgin's role as Mother leads the People of God to turn with filial confidence to her who is ever ready to listen with a mother's affection and efficacious assistance.(121) Thus the People of God

have learned to call on her as the Consoler of the afflicted, the Health of the sick, and the Refuge of sinners, that they may find comfort in tribulation, relief in sickness and liberating strength in guilt. For she, who is free from sin, leads her children to combat sin with energy and resoluteness.(122) This liberation from sin and evil (cf. Mt. 6:13)-it must be repeated-is the necessary premise for any renewal of Christian living.

The Blessed Virgin's exemplary holiness encourages the faithful to "raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth before the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues."(123) It is a question of solid, evangelical virtues: faith and the docile acceptance of the Word of God (cf. Lk. 1:26-38, 1:45, 11:27-28; Jn. 2:5); generous obedience (cf. Lk. 1:38); genuine humility (cf. Lk. 1:48); solicitous charity (cf. Lk. 1:39-56); profound wisdom (cf. Lk. 1:29, 34; 2:19, 33:51); worship of God manifested in alacrity in the fulfillment of religious duties (cf. Lk. 2:21-41), in gratitude for gifts received (cf. Lk. 1:46-49), in her offering in the Temple (cf. Lk. 2:22-24) and in her prayer in the midst of the apostolic community (cf. Acts 1:12-14); her fortitude in exile (cf. Mt. 2:13-23) and in suffering (cf. Lk. 2:34-35, 49; Jn. 19:25); her poverty reflecting dignity and trust in God (cf. Lk. 1:48, 2:24) her attentive care for her Son, from His humble birth to the ignominy of the cross (cf. Lk. 2:1-7; Jn. 19:25-27); her delicate forethought (cf. Jn. 2:1-11); her virginal purity (cf. Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-38); her strong and chaste married love. These virtues of the Mother will also adorn her children who steadfastly study her example in order to reflect it in their own lives. And this progress in virtue will appear as the consequence and the already mature fruit of that pastoral zeal which springs from devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Devotion to the Mother of the Lord becomes for the faithful an opportunity for growing in divine grace, and this is the ultimate aim of all pastoral activity. For it is impossible to honor her who is "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28) without thereby honoring in oneself the state of grace, which is friendship with God, communion with Him and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is this divine grace which takes possession of the whole man and conforms him to the image of the Son of God (cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18). The Catholic Church, endowed with centuries of experience, recognizes in devotion to the Blessed Virgin a powerful aid for man as he strives for fulfillment. Mary, the New Woman, stands at the side of Christ, the New Man, within whose mystery the mystery of man(124) alone finds true light; she is given to us as a pledge and guarantee that God's plan in Christ for the salvation of the whole man has already achieved realization in a creature: in her. Contemplated in the episodes of the Gospels and in the reality which she already possesses in the City of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary offers a calm vision and a reassuring word to modern man, torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust. She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death.

Let the very words that she spoke to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5), be a seal on our Exhortation and a further reason in favor of the pastoral value of devotion to the Blessed Virgin as a means of leading men to Christ. Those words, which at first sight were limited to the desire to remedy an embarrassment at the feast, are seen in the context of Saint John's Gospel to re-echo the words used by the people of Israel to give approval to the Covenant at Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:8, 24:3, 7; Dt. 5:27) and to renew their commitments (cf. Jos. 24:24; Ezr. 10:12; Neh. 5:12). And they are words which harmonize wonderfully with those spoken by the Father at the theophany on Mount Tabor: "Listen to him" (Mt. 17:5).

Epilogue

58. Venerable Brothers, we have dealt at length with an integral element of Christian worship: devotion to the Mother of the Lord. This has been called for by the nature of the subject, one which in these recent years has been the object of study and revision and at times the cause of some perplexity. We are

consoled to think that the work done by this Apostolic See and by yourselves in order to carry out the norms of the Council-particularly the liturgical reform-is a stepping-stone to an ever more lively and adoring worship of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to an increase of the Christian life of the faithful. We are filled with confidence when we note that the renewed Roman liturgy, also taken as a whole, is a splendid illustration of the Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin. We are upheld by the hope that the directives issued in order to render this devotion ever more pure and vigorous will be applied with sincerity. We rejoice that the Lord has given us the opportunity of putting forward some points for reflection in order to renew and confirm esteem for the practice of the rosary. Comfort, confidence, hope and joy are the sentiments which we wish to transform into fervent praise and thanksgiving to the Lord as we unite our voice with that of the Blessed Virgin in accordance with the prayer of the Roman Liturgy.

Dear Brothers, while we express the hope that thanks to your generous commitment, there will be among the clergy and among the people entrusted to your care a salutary increase of devotion to Mary with undoubted profit for the Church and for society, we cordially impart our special apostolic blessing to yourselves and to all the faithful people to whom you devote your pastoral zeal.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the second day of February, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, in the year 1974, the eleventh of our Pontificate.

PAULUS PP. VI

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Cf Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* IV,3, 6-10: CSEL 19 p. 279.
- 2) Cf II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1-3, 11, 21, 48, AAS 56 (1964), pp 97-98, 102-103, 105-106, 113.
- 3) II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.
- 4) Cf II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65.
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. Preface.
- 7) Cf II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on, the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 66-67: AAS 57 (1965), pp 65-66, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p 125.
- 8) Apostolic Exhortation, *Signum Magnum*: AAS 59 (1967) pp. 465-475
- 9) Cf II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 3: AAS 56 (1964). p 98.
- 10) Cf II Vatican Council *ibid*, 102: AAS 56 (1954), p 125.

11) Cf. Roman Missal restored by Decree of the Sacred Ecumenical II Vatican Council, promulgated by authority of Pope Paul VI typical edition, MCMLXX, 8 December, Preface.

12) Roman Missal, restored by Decree of the Sacred Ecumenical II Vatican Council promulgated by authority of Pope Paul VI, *Orao Lectionum Missae*, typical edition MCMLXIX. p. 8, First Reading (Year A: 1.; 7:10-14: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive"; Year B: 2: Sam 7:1-15; 8b-11, 16: "The throne of David shall be established for ever before the face of the Lord"; Year C: Mic 5:2a [Heb 1-4a]: "Out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel").

13) Ibid., p. 8, Gospel (Year A: Mt 1:18-24: "Jesus is born of Mary who was espoused to Joseph, the son of David"; Year B: Lk 1:26-38: "You are to conceive and bear a son; Year C: Lk 1:39-45: "Why should I be honoured with a visit from the Mother of my Lord?").

14) Cf. Roman Missal Advent Preface, II.

15) Roman Missal, Ibid.

16) Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer I, *Communicantes* for Christmas and its octave.

17) Roman Missal, 1 January, Entry antiphon and Collect.

18) Cf. Roman Missal, 22 August. Collect.

19) Roman Missal, 8 September, Prayer after Communion.

20) Roman Missal, 31 May, Collect.

21) Cf. *ibid.*, Collect and Prayer over the gifts.

22) Cf. Roman Missal, 15 September, Collect.

23) Cf. 1, p. 15.

24) From among the many anaphoras cf. the following which are held in special honour by the Eastern rites: Anaphora Marci Evangelistae: *Præx Eucharistica*, ed A. Hanggi-I, Pahl. Fribourg Editions Universitaires, 1968, p. 107; Anaphora Iacobi fratris Domini graeca *ibid.* p. 257; Anaphora Ioannis Chrysostomi, *ibid.*, p. 229.

25) Cf. Roman Missal, 8 December, Preface.

26) Cf. Roman Missal, 15 August, Preface.

27) Cf. Roman Missal, 1 January, Prayer after Communion.

28) Cf. Roman Missal, Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 6, Tempore Paschali, Collect.

29) Roman Missal, 15 September, Collect.

30) Roman Missal, 31 May Collect. On the same lines is the Preface of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1; "We do well... in celebrating the memory of the Virgin Mary... to glorify your love for us in the words of her song of thanksgiving."

31) Cf. Lectionary, III Sunday of Advent (Year C: Zeph 3:14-18a); IV Sunday of Advent (cf. above footnote 12); Sunday within the octave of Christmas (Year A; Mt 2:13-15 Year B; Lk 2:22-40; Year C; Lk 2:41-52); II Sunday after Christmas (Jn 1:1-18); VII Sunday after Easter (Year A: Acts 1:12-14); II Sunday of the Year C: Jn 1:1-12); X Sunday of the Year (Year B: Gen 3:9-15); XIV Sunday of the Year (Year B: Mk 6:16)

32) Cf. Lectionary, the catechumenate and baptism of adults the Lord's Prayer (Second Reading 2 Gal. 4:47); Christian initiation outside the Easter Vigil (Gospel, 7, Jn 1:1-5; 9-16; 16-18); Nuptial Mass (Gospel, 7, Jn 2:1-11); consecration of Virgins and religious profession (First Reading 7, Is 61:9-11; Gospel, 6 Mk 3:31-35; Lk 1:26-38 [cf. Ordo Consecrationis Virginum 130; ordo professionis religiosae, pars alter, 145]).

33) Cf. Lectionary, For refugees and exiles (Gospel, 1 Mt 2:13-15; 19-23); In thanksgiving (First Reading 4 Zeph 3:14-15).

34) Cf. La Divina Commedia, Paradiso XXXIII, 1-9 cf. Liturgy of the Hours, remembrance of Our Lady on Saturdays, Office of Reading Hymn.

35) Ordo baptismi parvulorum 48: Ordo initiationis christiana adultorum, 214.

36) Cf. Rituale Romanum, Tit. VII, cap. III, De benedictione mulieris post partum.

37) Cf. Ordo professionis religiosae, Pars Prior, 57 and 67.

38) Cf. Ordo consecrationis virginum, 16.

39) Cf. Ordo professionis religiosae, Pars Prior, 62 and 142; Pars Altera, 67 and 158; Ordo consecrationis virginum, 18 and 20.

40) Cf. Ordo unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis curae, 143, 146, 147. 150.

41) Cf. Roman Missal, Masses for the Dead, For dead brothers and sisters, relations and benefactors. Collect.

42) Cf. Ordo exsequiarum 226.

43) Cf. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 63: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.

44) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 100-101.

45) Sermo 215, 4: PL 38, 1074.

46) Ibid.

47) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 21: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 827-828.

48) Cf. *Adversus Haereses* IV. 7, 1: PG 7, 1, 990-991: S Ch. 100, t. II, pp. 454-458.

49) Cf. *Adversus Haereses* III, 10, 2: PG 7, 1, 873: S Ch. 34, p.164.

- 50) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 62: AAS 57 (1965), p. 63.
- 51) II Vatican Council Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 83: AAS 56 (1964), p.121.
- 52) II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 63: AAS 57 (1965) P. 64.
- 53) Ibid. 64: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.
- 54) Tractatus XXV (In Nativitate Domini), 5: CCL 138, p. 123; S. Ch. 22 p. 132; cf. also Tractatus XXIX In Nativitate Domini 1: CCL ibid., p. 147; S. Ch ibid, p. 178; Tractatus LXIII (De Passione Domini) 6:CCL ibid p. 386: S. Ch. 74 p. 82.
- 55) M Ferotin, *Le Liber Mozarabicus Sacramentorum*, col. 56.
- 56) In Purificatione, B. Mariae, Sermo III, 2: PL 183, 370; Sancti Bernardi Opera, ed J. Leclercq-H. Rochais , vol IV, Rome 1966. p. 342.
- 57) Cf. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 57: AAS 57 (1965), p. 61.
- 58) Ibid, 58: AAS 57 (1965), p. 61.
- 59) Cf. Pius XII Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*: AAS 35 (1943), P. 247.
- 60) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 47: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 113.
- 61) ibid. 102, 106: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 125, 126.
- 62) "design to remember all who have been pleasing to you throughout the ages the holy Fathers, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles... and the holy and glorious Mother of God and all the saints... may they remember our misery and poverty, and together with us may they offer you this great and unbloody sacrifice": *Anaphora Iacobi fratris Domini syriaca: Prex Eucharistica*, ed. A. Hånggi-I. Pahl Fribourg, Editions Universitaires, 1968, p. 274.
- 63) *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* 11 26: CSEL 32, IV, p. 55: S. Ch. 45, pp. 83-84.
- 64) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 62: AAS 57 (1965), p. 63.
- 65) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 125.
- 66) Cf. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 67: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65-66.
- 67) Cf. Ibid.
- 68) Cf. II Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 104: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 125-126.

70) Cf. Paul VI, Talk of 24 April 1970, in the church of Our Lady of Bonaria in Cagliari: AAS 62 (1970) p. 300.

71) Pius IX, Apostolic Letter *Ineffabilis Deus*: Pii IX Pontificis Maximi Acta, I, 1, Rome 1854, p. 599. Cf. also V. Sardi. La solenne definizione del dogma dell'Immacolato concepimento di Maria Santissima, Atti e documenti..., Rome 1904-1905, vol. II, p. 302.

72) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65.

73) S. Ildephonsus, *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae* chapter XII: PL 96, 108.

74) Cf. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 56: AAS 57 (1965), p. 60 and the authors mentioned in note 176 of the document.

75) Cf. St Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* II, 37-38; CSEL 79 pp. 100-101; Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini* II chapter II: CSEL 17 pp. 247-249. St. Bede, *Homilia* 1,3:CCL 122, p. 18 and p. 20.

76) Cf. St Ambrose, *De institutione virginis*, chapter XII, 79: PL 16 (ed 1880), 339; Epistula 30, 3 and Epistula 42, 7: ibid 1107 and 1175; *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* X 132. S Ch 52, p 200. S. Proclus of Constantinople, *Oratio* I, 1 and *Oratio* V, 3: PG 65, 681 and 720; St. Basil of Seleucia, *Oratio* XXXIX, 3: PG 85, 433; St. Andrew of Crete, *Oratio* IV: PG 97, 868; St Germanus of Constantinople, *Oratio* IIII, 15: PG 98, 305.

77) cf. St. Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum* I, 33: PL 23, 267; St Ambrose, *Epistula* 63, 33: PL 16 (ed. 1880), 1249; *De institutione virginis*, chapter XVII, 105: ibid., 346; *De Spiritu Sancto* III, 79-80: CSEL 79, pp. 182-183; Sedulius, *Hymn "A solis ortus cardine"*, verses 13-14 CSEL 10, p. 164; *Hymnus Acatistos*, Str 23; ed I. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, I, p. 261; St Proclue of Constantanople, *Oratio* I, 3: PG 65, 648; *Oratio* II, 6: Ibid., 700; St Basil of Seleucia, *Oratio* IV, In *Nativitatem B. Mariae*: PG 97, 868; St John Damascene, *Oratio* IV, 10: PG 96 677.

78) Cf. Severus of Antioch, *Homilia* 57: PO 8, pp. 357-358; Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Homilia de sancta Maria Deipara*: PG 93, 1464; Chrysippus of Jerusalem, *Oratio in sanctam Mariam Deiparam*, 2 PO 19, p. 338; St Andrew of Crete, *Oratio* V: PG 97, 896; St John Damascene, *Oratio* VI, 6: PG 96, 972.

79) *Liber Apotheosis*, verses 571-572: CCL 126. p. 97.

80) Cf. S Isidore, *De ortu et obitu Patrum*, chapter LXVII III: PL 83, 148; St. Ildephonsus, *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae*, chapter X: PL 96, 95; St Bernard, In *Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae*: *Sermo* IV, 4 PL 183, 428; In *Nativitate B. Virginis Mariae*: ibid. 442 St Peter Damien, *Carmina sacra et preces* II, *Oratio ad Deum Filium*: PL 145, 921; *Antiphonarium officii*, ed. R.J. Hesbert, Rome 1970, vol IV, n. 6314, p. 80.

81) Cf. Paulus Diaconus, *Homilia* I, In *Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis*: PL 95, 1567; *De Assumptione sanctae Mariae Virginis*: Paschasio Radherito trib, 31, 42, 57, 83: ed. A. Ripberger. in "Spicilegium Friburgense" 9, 1962, pp. 72, 76, 84, 96-97; Eadmer of Canterbury, *De excellentia Virginis Mariae*, chapters IV-V: PL 159, 562-567; St Bernard, In *laudibus Virginis Matris*. *Homilia* IV, 3: *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. J Leclercq-H. Rochais, IV, Rome 1966, pp. 49-50.

82) Cf. Origen, In *Lucam* *Homilia* VII, 3: PG 13 1817: S. Ch. 87, p. 156; St Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Aggacum prophetam*, chapter XIX: PG 71, 1060; St Ambrose, *De fide* IV 9, 113-114: CSEL 78, pp. 197-198; *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* I, 23 and 27-28: CSEL 32, IV, pp. 53-54

and 55-56; Severianus Gabalensis, Antipater of Bostra Homilia in Sanctissimae Deiparae Annuntiationem, 16; PG 85, 1785.

83) Cf. Eadmer of Canterbury, *De excellentia Virginis Mariae* chapter VII: P: 159, 571: St Amedeus of Lausanne, *De Maria Virgini Matre*, Homilia VII: PL 188, 1337: S Ch 72, p. 184.

84) *De virginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae*, chapter XII: PL 96, 106.

85) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 54: AAS 57 (1965), p. 59. Cf. Paulus VI Allocutio ad Patres Conciliares habua altera exacta Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi Sessione, 4 December 1963: AAS 56 (1964), p. 37.

86) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 6, 7-8, 9-11: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 8-9, 9-12, 12-21.

87) Ibid., 63: AAS 57 (1965) p. 64.

88) St Cyprian, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae unitate*, 5: CSEL 3, p. 214.

89) Isaac de Stella, Sermo LI, *In Assumptione B. Mariae*: PL 194, 1863.

90) Sermo XXX, I: S. Ch. 164, p. 134.

91) Cf II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 66-69: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-67.

92) Cf. II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 25: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 829-830.

93) Or cit., 13: AAS 56 (1964), p. 103.

94) Cf. *Officium magni canonis paracletici*, Magnum Orogion Athens 1963 p. 558: passim in liturgical canons and prayers: cf. Sophronius Eustradiadou, Theotokarion, Chennevieres-su Marne 1931, pp. 9, 19.

95) Cf II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 69: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 66-67.

96) Cf ibid., 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 103: AAS 56 (1964), p. 125.

97) II Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 67: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-66.

98) Ibid, 66: AAS 57 (1965), p. 65.

99) Cf. Paul VI, *Address in the Vatican Basilica to the Fathers of the Council*, 21 November 1964: AAS 56 (1964), p. 1017.

100) II Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 20: AAS 57 (1965), p. 105.

101) Encyclical Letter, *Adiutricem Populi*: AAS 28 (1895-1896), p. 135.

102) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 56: AAS 57 (1965), p. 60.

103) Cf. St Peter Chrysologus, Sermo CXLIII: PL 52 583.

104) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 55: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 59-60.

105) Cf. Paul VI Apostolic Constitution, *Signum Magnum* I: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 467-468: Roman Missal, 15 September, Prayer over the gifts.

106) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 67: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 65-66.

107) St. Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, Tractatus X, 3; CCL 36, pp. 101-102; Epistula 243, Ad Laetum, 9: CSEL 57, pp. 575-576; St Bede, *In Lucae Evangelium expositio*, IV, XI, 28: CCL 120, p. 237: Homilia I, 4: CCL 122. pp. 26-27.

108) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 58: AAS 57 (1965), p. 61.

109) Roman Missal, IV Sunday of Advent, Collect. Similarly the Collect of 25 March, which may be used in place of the previous one in the recitation of the Angelus.

110) Pius XII, Letter to the Archbishop of Manila "Philippinas Insulas": AAS 38 (1946), p. 419.

111) Discourse to the participants in the III Dominican International Rosary Congress: Insegnamenti di Paolo VI 1, (1963) pp. 463-464.

112) In AAS 58 (1966), pp. 745-749.

113) In AAS 61 (1969), pp. 649-654.

114) Cf. 13: AAS 56 (1964) pp. 103.

115) Decree on the Lay Apostolate, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11: AAS 58 (1966) p. 848.

116. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 11: AAS 57 (1965), p. 16.

117) Cf. II Vatican Council, Decree on the Lay Apostolate, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11: AAS 58 (1966) p. 848

118) Op cit., 27.

119) II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 53: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 58-59.

120) La Divina Commedia, Paradiso XXXIII, 4-6.

121) Cf. II Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 60-63: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 62-64.

122) Cf. *ibid.*, 65: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 64-65.

123) *Ibid.*, 65: AAS 57 (1965), p. 64.

124) Cf. II Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 1042-1044.

125) Cf. Roman Missal 31 May Collect.