

# MARY, MOTHER AND QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

## INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church affirms that Mary is essentially a mother and queen. She was predestined from all eternity, included in the very decree of the Incarnation, to be the Mother of the Son of God made man. The predestination includes not only her physical or biological maternity in relation to her Son but also her spiritual maternity in regard to all the redeemed children of God, the disciples of her Son.

The Church professes from time to time that Mary is Mother of God (*Theotókos*). She admits and teaches that the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has given birth to Jesus is in a certain sense honored as a Queen. In this case, the Church teaches that Our Lady is a Queen of Heaven, the Queen of the world, the queenly Virgin, etc.

In this article, I would like to elaborate the theological concept of Mary as Mother and a Queen according to Church teaching and give a short theological reflection on this theme. First of all, I will be focusing on Mary as Mother of God and then continue by paraphrasing the Church teaching on her as a Queen as stated and taught by the popes. Last but not least, I will be elaborating the Mariology concept that arises from the popes' teachings on Mary as a Queen and Mother.

## MARY OF NAZARETH: *MOTHER OF GOD* (*Theotókos*)

The Catholic faith states that Mary is the Mother of God who has given birth to Jesus, the Son of the Almighty God in the midst of the world. The Church doctrine on Mary as the Mother of God (*Theotókos*) or «Godbearers» as firmly held by the Church is basically a truth of the faith of the Catholic Church which has been believed for centuries. According to the Montfortian mariologist, Stefano de Fiores (†2012), this term, *Theotókos* is not used or known in the New Testament. Even so, its contents are implicitly contained in Mary's title as «Mother Jesus» and in the confession of Jesus as the Son of God and God Himself. It then says that the equivalent term is (*Theotókos*), from the Gospel phrase from Luke: «Mother my God» (my Lord's mother) (Lk 1:43) and the true Mother Immanuel in the prophecy of Isaiah (cf. Is 7:14) quoted in Mt 1:23: «which means God is with us» (cf. S. DE FIORES, 2005:98). The Council of Ephesus (431) clearly demonstrates the belief that Mary is the Mother of God (*Theotókos*). This Church's belief was essentially born as an effort to oppose the way of thinking of Nestorius, the Bishop of Constantinople and his followers. He and his followers denied the divinity of Jesus Christ and therefore called Mary as *Christotokos* only, i.e., Mary was only the Mother of the human Jesus.

According to Sarah Jane Boss, one of the founders of the Centre for Marian Studies, basically Nestorius did not doubt the nature of Christ as God and man. For him, in this context Mary gave birth to the man Jesus Christ but not his divinity. Thus, Mary cannot be called the Mother of God (*Theotókos*), but the Mother of the human Jesus Christ. This theological perspective or concept then becomes very different from the pattern of approach used by Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria, which emphasized the principle of the divinity and humanity of Jesus in one nature which cannot be separated. Consequently, Mary who gave birth to her Son, in Cyril's view, was truly the Mother of God (*Theotókos*) and not as the idea of Nestorius which states Mary did not give birth to a Son of God and therefore she is not called *Theotókos* (cf. S. J. BOSS, 2007:54). On the other hand, Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, refused Nestorius' argument and insisted that Mary was the *Theotókos, dei genitrix*, the one who gave birth to God. If Nestorius rejected the title of Mary *Theotókos* because he emphasized the human reality of Jesus Christ and therefore preferred to use the term *Christotokos*, Cyril of Alexandria emphasized the opposite, called, Mary the Mother of God (*Theotókos*). If Nestorius emphasized the extrinsic unity of the human subject of Jesus and the Word of God (moral unity), Cyril underlined that the incarnate Word of God was where the human and divine natures were intrinsically united (cf. S. DE FIORES, 2005:102-103). Cyril's opinions were used by the Council of Ephesus (431) to condemn and reject Nestorius' heretical views. The Council uses Cyril's second letter addressed to Nestorius (*Epistola dogmatica*) to reject Nestorius' position and that means the Council agrees with or adheres to the Nicene credo (325) (cf. L. GAMBERO, 2009:477-478). Therefore, the Council of Ephesus, in this sense is an important council in the history of the Catholic Church which is able to guard and maintain the truth of faith regarding the status and role of Mary's motherhood as the Mother of God (*Theotókos*). Thus, the Holy Virgin Mary not only gave birth to the human Jesus of Nazareth but also gave birth to the same person, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, God who became human (cf. G. H. TAWARD, 1992:59-62).

The belief in Mary's role as the Mother of God, in the pilgrimage of Christian life, is still being inherited and lived. Mary is one who has become the Mother of all who seek and long for salvation through Her Son. She is the Blessed Virgin Mary of Nazareth who through her *Fiat* has submitted herself to God's guidance (cf. Lk 1:26-38). Because of her obedience, God became human, born from her holy womb, and she became the most blessed Mother among all women as Elizabeth called for (cf. Lk 1:42). She herself – with the work of God's grace working in her – calls herself a person who is respected and glorified by all generations as "happy one» (cf. Lk 1:48) (cf. S. DE FIORES, 2005:75).

The Annunciation of Mary is regarded as joyful or the good news for humans and the world, because from there the salvation that comes from God can occur. In the mystery of God who

incarnates into a human or «Incarnation» through the Virgin Mary (cf. Lk 1:26-38, Jn 1:14, Gal 4:4-5) God empties Himself (*kenosis*) and took the form of a servant (cf. Phil 2:7). He has actually done a great work of salvation. This salvation actually came through Mary, who, with her heart open to the Word of God (cf. Lk 1:38), Jesus Christ became Immanuel, God who lives in the midst of humanity (cf. Is 7:14).

## **MARY AS A QUEEN AND MOTHER**

### *Mary as Queen in Church Teaching*

When we talk about Mary as a Queen, first of all we have to know what does it mean when the Church refers to her as a Queen. In brief, I would like to paraphrase some ideas of «Queen» as taught by the Church. Regarding this, it is stated that there is another direct norm which we have to follow in studying the doctrine of Mary's queenship besides Scripture, the writings of the Fathers and the Liturgy. Another direct norm that was mentioned previously is the declaration of the Roman Pontiffs and of the councils. According to George F. Kirwin's study, «Our Lady's Queenship in the Magisterium of the Church, has been treated (up to 1952) by Eamon Carroll in *Marian Studies*» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:61).

According to this study, Pius XII highlights rapidly some of the early popes who wrote about Our Lady as Queen. It goes back as far as the seventh century to St. Martin I (649-655) who referred to Mary as «Our glorious Lady and Virgin». However, in reference to this, it is said that there are other witnesses before that time, for instance, Francesco Luis Suarez (†1617), a Spanish philosopher and theologian cites a sermon of Pope Leo the Great (†461) who argues: «Virgo Regia davidicae stirpis eligitur, quae sacro gravidanda foetu divinam humanamque prolem prius conciperet mente quam ventre». Based on this sermon, we can say that Mary, who is mentioned here, is really a royal virgin of the Davidic race. She is chosen by the Almighty as a mother who being sacredly pregnant with a divine fetus who is a divine human being.

G. Kirwin states that from that time the popes have referred to Mary as the Queen of Heaven, the Queen of the world, the queenly Virgin, etc. Regarding this queenship of Mary, he highlights that the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681) defines that the Word of God became incarnate through the power of the Holy Spirit and the glorious and ever-Virgin Mary, Lady, true Mother of God. And the word for Lady was «Despoina», a queenly title. On this point, he writes: «The note of universality is evident in the title given to Mary "Domina Omnium", by Gregory II (†731)» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:61-62).

Based on the aforementioned explanations, we can paraphrase that the presence of Mary in the Church is really meaningful, or as stated by Italian theologian, Angelo Amato that Our Lady,

Mother of God has an undeniable and irreplaceable role, biblically founded and historically verified (cf. A. AMATO, 2011:342). Her high status or position as a Queen and also as a Mother of God has been professed and taught by the Church. It is said that until Vatican II what we call Mary's queenly status as mentioned and admitted was professed by the Conciliar Fathers in the Second Council of Nicea (787). This Council defined the legitimacy of the cult of the sacred images. G. Kirwin writes: «In defining this truth, the council spoke of the images of "Our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ" and those of "our stainless Lady, the holy Mother of God." Certainly, the term, "Domina" was not defined but it is equally certain that the term was used purposely. The Fathers in the council intended not only to define the legitimacy of the cult of images but also to pay tribute to Mary's queenly status» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:62).

Regarding the veneration to Mary as a Queen, it is stated that many popes have had many inscriptions made and frescoes painted to depict Mary as the sovereign queen. G. Kirwin points out that Pope John VII (705-707) had a chapel built in honor of Mary. There is a representation of Mary dressed as a queen with John at her side. This inscription is written: «Johannes indignus Episcopus fecit Beatae Dei Genitricis servus». Likewise, the same title can be seen also in the ruins of the church «Santa Maria Antica» in the Roman forum: *Johannes servus Sanctae Mariae*» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:62).

Based on the study conducted by G. Kirwin, we will get many insights regarding the title of Mary as the Queen, a person who has meaningful role and high status in the Church. He highlights that from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century there were many testimonies of words and gestures of the popes indicating their approval of the title of queen applied to Mary. He argues also that Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) refers to Mary's queenship in his constitution concerning the «Immaculate Conception». Then, Sixtus V (1585-1590) gave his approbation to the Litany of Loreto. There are many queenly titles that can be found there. The queenly title of Mary was also stated by Paul V (1605-1621) in the papal bull *Immensae Bonitatis* (27<sup>th</sup> October 1615). He stated that since God willed to choose Mary from the kingly line of David and since she was adorned with all the virtues and graces was responsible for our liberation from captivity she merits to be called «Queen of heaven and earth» (cf. G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:63). Besides those popes who have already mentioned specifically the queenly title of Mary as a Queen, there are other popes who really also concentrate or highlight her status as Queen. Urban VIII (1623-1644) who mentions Mary in papal bull *Imperscrutabilis*, Benedict XIV (1740-1758) who writes about her in *Gloriosae Dominae* (27<sup>th</sup> September 1748), and Pius IX (1846-1878) in *Ineffabilis Deus* (8<sup>th</sup> December 1854) describes Mary's power as limitless. Then, Leo XIII (1876-1903) invokes Mary as Queen. He talks of her queenship in terms of its connection with her personal role in the redemption. Pius X (1903-1914) highlights Mary's role as «Cooperator» in the

redemption of mankind. Then, Benedict XV (1914-1922), directs many pleas for peace to Our Lady, the Queen of Peace. He looks upon her in intercession as all-powerful and unfailing (cf. G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:63).

In many ways, Pius XI (1922-1939) repeats and clarifies all that his predecessors had paraphrased or stated about the queenship of Our Lady (Mary as Queen). As per G. Kirwin, what we called, Mary's queenly intercession in heaven is shown to be the prolongation of her cooperation in the redemption by her offering of her Son on Calvary. All of this can be explored specifically in his encyclical letter *Lux Veritatis* (25<sup>th</sup> December 1931). Here, this pope attributes to her divine maternity the great dignity that is hers. Then, from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the Pontifical of Pius XI (1922-1939), G. Kirwin argues: «there is a steady increase both in the frequency and the clarity of expression with which Mary is proclaimed Queen by the Roman Pontiffs. The extent of her queenship is shown to be universal, its power limitless. There is a continual recognition of its maternal characteristics and, particularly with the more recent popes, we encounter an increasing tendency to insist upon her role as Cooperator in the redemption, with her Son as one of the two foundations for this dignity».

One of the most important papal documents which concentrate and speaks about the queenship of Mary is the Encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam* issued by Pius XII on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1954. In this encyclical, the Holy Father indicates that he is not «proposing a new truth for the Christian faith, but one which the faithful have for centuries believed». He states that the title and the arguments on which Mary's royal dignity is «based have at all times been clearly expressed, and are already contained as handed down long ago in the documents of the Church and in the books of the sacred liturgy» (PIUS XII, AAS 46, 1954). In reference to this, it is said that this encyclical «is very cautious in speaking of the foundations of this truth. The pope includes his scriptural citations within the context of «tradition», i.e., he mentions definite scriptural texts and speaks of them as being the source from which the Christian people «easily acknowledge the supreme royal dignity of the Mother of God» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:79). According to the author, the pope talks about the ancient writers of the Church as basing their stand on the words of St. Gabriel and on the words of Elizabeth. Based on this consideration, he argues that this encyclical cannot be used as a foundation for saying that the doctrine of queenship is contained formally, explicitly in Scripture. As per him, «the most important doctrinal contribution of this encyclical is to be found in the paragraphs which treat specifically of the foundations of Mary's queenship and its mode of exercise. It is in studying these foundations that our understanding of the nature of the queenship will be clarified» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:80).

In the encyclical, the pope mentions clearly two foundations: *first*, the divine maternity and *second*, the part she played in the work of eternal salvation. This pope calls the divine maternity the main principle (*praecipuum principium*) upon which her dignity rests. Basically, what we call the

maternity of Mary and her cooperation are intimately connected. In this case, as per G. Kirwin, it seems that the divine maternity of Mary and her cooperation in the redemption are formally distinct, yet inseparable foundations of her queenship. Thus, however there is an intrinsic connection between these two elements. Regarding this, obviously Our Lady is mother so that she might be His associate. G. Kirwin writes: «In his allocution the pope says that the origin of Mary's glories, that which illuminates her whole personality and mission is the moment she uttered her "Fiat". It was then that she expressed her consent to God's plan and became mother and queen» (G. F. KIRWIN, 2007:81).

### *Mariology pre-Second Vatican Council*

As stated previously, all these considerations on the queenship of Mary basically can show a specific concept of Mariology (*Mariology of the Popes*). We have to say that before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Marian phenomenon flourished. Everywhere people spoke so broadly and deeply about the Blessed Virgin Mary because of the many apparitions and enthusiasm for her devotion. This was also triggered by the «explosion» of a passion for veneration (devotion) by the people as well as by the emergence of a number of devotional writings and theological (cf. G. M. BESUTTI, 1950:29,224-267). Mariology in this period was marked by the emergence of so many Apostolic Letters, Apostolic Exhortations and Encyclicals of the Popes which aimed to direct or guide true devotional life to Mary.

The popes have made a significant contribution to the growth and development of devotion to Mary. They can be said to be Marian popes who have a high sensibility towards the figure of Mary. The popes in question are Pius IX (1846-1878), Leo XIII (1878-1903), Pius X (1903-1914), Benedict XV (1914-1922), Pius XI (1922-1939), Pius XII (1939-1958) (cf. W. J. DOHENY, 1955:1-275). Apart from that, there is also an intention or purpose to move and launch certain activities related to Mary. For this reason, Mariology in this case is strongly characterized by the title «Mariology of the Popes». The writings are generally speculative-neoscholastic in tone. In a very strong way this is also marked by the concentration on the virtues of Mary and the various devotions to her. Mariology before the Second Vatican Council basically uses a certain method. The method used is «Thomasiatic». De Fiores argues that Mariology was born in the era of «Neo-Thomism» where the method adopted was «deductive» (consisting of a rational process then moving from general principles to a certain or definite conclusion). In this context, the discourse on Mary also applies exactly to this principle (cf. S. DE FIORES, 1991:31).

Many theological reflections or writings about Mary depart from a long and tiring discussion and debate about the role and function of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church. What later became known as Chapter VIII *Lumen Gentium* regarding the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ

and the Church is actually the final text is emerging from a long process of discussion with «slightly different» theological backgrounds between the two groups of Council Fathers. *First*, the group that emphasizes what is called *crisotipica* (Mariology is viewed from the Christ type); seeing Mary in harmony or parallel to Christ. *Second*, the group that focus on the other kind of Mariology, called, *ecclesiotipica* (Mariology is viewed from the Church perspective) in which the Conciliar Fathers wished and proposed that Mary be included in the schema on the Church. Thus, she is no longer seen as a person who is far above the Church like the view of «Christ-type Mariology» (*crisotipica*), but she enters as a member of the Church.

In summary, in all these writings, there appear two major tendencies that are very different in theological content in understanding the place and role of Mary in the history of salvation. The first tendency is to see Mary from Christ's point of view. Such a tendency is very clear to equate Christ with Mary on the same level. Therefore, Mary is seen in complete union with Christ and inseparable from Him (*associata a Cristo*).

Mary is perceived as so great and glorious that her title and role are analogous to those of Christ. In this context, if Christ is called *Redemptor* or *Redemptore*, then Mary is also called *coredemptrix* or *corredemptrice* (co-redeemer). If Christ is called *Mediator* or *Mediatore*, then Mary is also called *Mediatrice* or *Mediatrice*. Likewise, if Christ is called King (*Rex* or *Re*), then Mary is called «Queen» (*Regina*). If Mary is seen to be so closely united to Christ, there is a danger that she is very far above the Church. In this sense, Mary is separate from the Church, between the two of them there is a vast and unbridgeable distance. This was the first tendency of great interest to the pre-conciliar theologians.

Some theologians, experts or the Conciliar Fathers actually see Mary from the perspective of the Church (*Church-type Mariology*). Mary is seen from the point of view of the Church, that is, her close and inseparable union with the Church. From this perspective, it is clear that Mary is not far above the Church, but a member of the Church. It is just that in her position as a member, she possesses qualities far superior to all other creatures (cf. *Lumen gentium* n. 53). Related to this, the Church views her as a *typos*, par-excellence. Mary also – when viewed from this perspective – is a personal Church (cf. A. E. KRISTİYANTO, 1987:12-13). For that reason, whatever happened to Mary in relation to Christ, also happened to the Church in relation to Christ. Thus, just as Mary is inseparable from Christ, so the Church cannot be separated from Christ Just as Mary has meaning only in relation to Christ, so the Church is also seen as meaningful in relation to Christ. This is the *ecclesiotipica* tendency, a tendency that has a place in the hearts of the conciliar at the Second Vatican Council when discussing Mary's position in the Church. From here, chapter VIII of the *Lumen*

*Gentium* was admitted and known later as the most important document on Our Lady in the Second Vatican Council (cf. F. B. WOTAN, 2021:63-78).

As previously mentioned, the title of *Lumen Gentium* chapter VIII is a discussion text (debate) from two schools: groups who see Mary's position above the Church and those who see Mary in her relationship with the Church. Through a process of struggle, long contemplation, discussion about Mary's position – whether it is analogous, aligned with Christ or being in the Church – the Council actually wants to show a new horizon on Mariology. With full confidence, the Council finally states that Mary was not seen as an isolated person (*crisotipica*) as emphasized by pre-Conciliar theology, but instead was seen as a figure who had a close relationship with Christians. In this context, Mary was reflected by the Conciliar Fathers as a member of the Church (*ecclesiotipica*) (cf. S. M. PERRELLA, 2005:193-194).

Both of these tendencies were debated in the Council whether the document on Mary should become a chapter of a document that talks about the Church or whether it was necessary to make a special document about Mary. After going through a long voting process, the group that chose Mary as a member of the Church received the most votes. Even so, in the end the two groups can be reconciled by talking about Mary in relation to the mystery of Christ and the Church.

## **Conclusion**

What the conciliarists were arguing about actually wanted to present two types of very strong mariological movements when they wanted to talk about the Blessed Virgin Mary. Apparently, they do not share the same point of view. At the Council, it was true that these two positions (groups), with very different tendencies, always insisted on defending their beliefs. Even so, in the end it still needed a definite solution and then the results were agreed upon in the final formulation. Indeed, after going through a long and tiring debate, a voting stage was finally held (29<sup>th</sup> October 1963) to draw up a certain scheme. The Council determines that the teaching about Mary should be included in the schema about the Church. Thus, according to this scheme, Mary is not perceived as an isolative person or her presence is far from the Church as highlighted by the pre-Vatican II theology but she is really united to the member of the Church. In this case, she is considered by the Conciliar Fathers as a member of the Church.

Mary, as a Mother and Queen obviously is a servant of God who has carried out her motherly duties faithfully. She accepts the Word of God and puts it into practice (cf. Lk 1:38). Mary's readiness to respond to God's Word through the Angel is a form of her responsibility and active participation in His work of salvation. Mary, who received the Word of God, kept it in her heart and carried it out

faithfully is an excellent model for the Church in matters of faith and charity. In carrying out that role, Mary involves her full potential. Mary's active involvement begins with showing her respect and responsibility as an obedient person through her *Fiat* to God (cf. Lk 1:38).

Mary was chosen by God to be His Mother and she freely consented to this motherhood. Mary was the only woman ever chosen to be a mother by her son. For this reason, her Son, who is divine, filled her soul and body with privileges of the highest order. She exceeded in a supereminent way all other human beings in grace and holiness.

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