

20210509:

Mariology II

The Dogmas

Last week we touched on Mary and Her relationship to the Holy Trinity, New Eve, privileges, a little on her fiat, predestination, Queenship, Jesus through Mary. Now we will get into what you would normally hear when you study Mariology and that are the dogmas.

MOTHER OF GOD

The first and greatest Marian title is that of “Theotokos” or Deipara” (“Mother of God”). This title was solemnly defined by the Church at the Council of Ephesus (AD 431),. Mother of God is a title that is not found literally in Scripture but is justified on the basis of it. Nestorius held the title Christokos (“Mother of Christ”) because the Gospel says that Mary is the Mother of Jesus, not God, but St. Elizabeth, in the Gospel, asks Mary: “And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Lk1:43). We know that “Lord” is equivalent to God (YHWH). Thus, in the Gospel, there is a clear foundation for the title Theotokos, given that St. Elizabeth does indeed greet Mary as “Mother of my God.”

Matthew 1:25 says that Mary “bore a son” Who is this son? We know that He is the divine Word. Mary conceived and gave birth to the eternal Son of God come in the flesh. If one asked what Mary gave birth to, one would have to respond : the human nature of Christ, because obviously She did not generate the divine nature. But who, when visiting a mother who has just given birth to a child, would ever ask her “what have you given birth to?” Such a phrase would sound offensive. Instead everyone asks the name: “what’s his name?” This question means: to whom have you given birth? The Son of Mary is not only a human nature; He is a Person. And this Person is not a human but a divine Person, He is God. That is why, while only having materially begotten the humanity of Jesus and not His divinity, Mary has full title to being not only “Mother of Christ” but also”Mother of God.” We've already said that this is all based on the communication of idioms found in Jesus, true God and true man.

IMMACULATE

All of the other titles, offices, and privileges of the Virgin Mary derive from the title and office of Mother of God. First of all Her Immaculate Conception, a doctrine present from the earliest times of the Church, but defined as a dogma rather recently by Blessed Pope Pius IX in 1854. This doctrine, defined infallibly by the Church, teaches that the Virgin Mary never knew the contagion of sin, neither personal sin nor Original Sin. She was preserved immaculate, without blemish, from the first instant of Her conception. The Immaculate Conception of Mary is a privilege that was granted to Her by God in view of Her divine Maternity. Since She had to be the Mother of God, that is, since She had to give humanity to the Word in the Incarnation, this humanity has to be pure and uncontaminated:

1)It would have been impossible for the Word to assume a flesh of sin. Moreover, He had to reproduce in Himself the integral human being as it left the hands of the Creator at the beginning (S.T. iii, q.31, a.2). But if He had inherited a flesh of sin, this would have been impossible. Thus, He predestined Mary to be exempt from the contagion of the fault of Adam and Eve. From Her, the Word took an immaculate humanity. Since the Son had to be immaculate, His Mother was immaculate as well. Regarding this last point, St. Andrew of Crete expressed it in this way: “The body of the Virgin is a land that God worked, the first fruits of the mass of Adam’s descendants divinized by Christ, the image that is truly a likeness of the primitive beauty, the clay kneaded by the hands of the divine Artist” (Sermo I de Dormitione Mariae). The metaphor of the pure earth was already found much earlier in St. Irenaeus: “Andas

the protoplast himself, Adam, had his substance from untilled and as yet virgin soil...so did He who is the Word, recapitulating Adam in Himself, rightly receive a birth, enabling Him to gather up Adam [into Himself], from Mary, who was as yet a virgin" (Against the Heretics. Anti-Nicene Fathers, vol 1. 454).

2) An eleventh century monk Eamer of Canterbury (d. 1126), a friend and biographer of St. Anselm of Canterbury, developed an argument that can be summarized in three Latin words, whose subject is Christ and whose object is the Immaculate Conception of His Mother: "potuit, decuit, ergo fecit" ("[Christ] had the power, it was fitting, therefore He did it").

3) About a 100 years after proclamation of the dogma, Pope Pius XII announced the encyclical *Fulgens Corona*, in which he emphasized two relevant aspects for understanding why Mary was preserved Immaculate. The first consists in God's love for Her: "If we consider the burning and sweet love which the Almighty God without doubt had, and has, for the Mother of His only begotten Son, for what reason can we even think that She was, even for the briefest moment of time, subject to sin and destitute of divine grace?" (1953. DS 39008) Secondly, the Immaculate Conception is justified because its hypothetical absence would call into question the working of the "Protevangelium," whereby there would always be enmity between the woman and the serpent:

Now, if at any time the Blessed Mary were destitute of Divine grace even for the briefest moment, because of contamination in Her conception by the hereditary stain of sin there would not have come between Her and the serpent that perpetual enmity spoken of from earlier Tradition Down to the time of the solemn definition of the Immaculate Conception, but rather a certain subjection" (Pius XII, *Fulgens Corona*).

A hypothesis in which She was at one point not free from sin would make it impossible to speak of Mary as the seed of a new creation and as the pure earth from which the Second Adam was drawn.

EVER-VIRGIN

The third Marian dogma officially recognized by the Magisterium of the Church is that of the perpetual Virginity of Mary, the most solid biblical foundation of which is the attestation of Mary: "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man? (Lk 1:34). [Note: Mary is called Virgin or Ever-Virgin by various ecumenical councils: Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Lateran IV (1215), Lyon II (1274), Florence (1439) and others. The dogmatic text giving the greater precision of expression of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary is the second canon of the Second Council of Constantinople (553): "If anyone does not confess the two births of the Word of God, one from the Father before the ages...the other [in which the Word...] was made flesh from Mary, the holy and glorious Mother of God ever Virgin, and was born of her, let him be anathema (DS 422).

When the Magisterium proclaims Mary Ever-Virgin, it means the word "virginity" in the most common and, "biological" sense. Generally, the texts avoid entering too much into details, because this would not be fitting and is not necessary. But on at least one occasion, the Magisterium was rather explicit:

If anyone does not, following the holy Fathers, confess properly and truly that holy Mary, ever virgin and immaculate, is Mother of God, since She conceived really and truly of the Holy Spirit, without seed [absque semine], God the Word Himself, who, before all ages, was born of God the Father, and that, in the latter age, She gave birth to Him without corruption, Her virginity remaining equally inviolate after His birth, let him be anathema/condemned" [Lateran Synod,

649, can.3. This throws out some theories about the nature and origin of the virile seed that Good placed in the womb of the Virgin to miraculously fertilize it]

The privilege of Perpetual Virginity is connected to the divine Maternity in that it expresses a consequence of the fact that Jesus Christ, born of Mary, is truly the Son of God and the Second Adam.

1)Concerning the first aspect: the fact that Jesus is Son of God implies that He possesses the highest degree of purity, a purity that is also manifested in His virginity. Christ is the Virgin par excellence, which is why He was born of the Virgin Mary [The Gospels make it very clear that Christ did not marry. In that culture, this represented a very rare (though not unique) fact, which could even give rise to suspicions. That mischievous thoughts might have been made by some of Jesus' adversaries about Him can be intuited from Mt 19:10-12, in which the Lord seems to respond to them.

2)As regards the second aspect, St. Irenaeus says that just as in the beginning God formed Adam from the virgin earth (because it was not yet cultivated by human hands), so the Second Adam took humanity from the Virgin Mary (Against Heresies)

3)The doctrine of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary teaches not only that Mary was Virgin before the birth (ante partum) [This means that the conception of Christ was virginal. St. Thomas, S.T. III,q.28,a.1]--it affirms perpetual, and therefore permanent, Virginity: both during the birth (in partu) and after birth (post partum). St. Augustine expresses the same concept with an equally classic formula, "Virgo, concepit, Virgo peperit, Virgo permansit" ("A Virgin conceived, a Virgin gave birth, and She remained a Virgin") It is clear that this implies certain miraculous interventions of God.

A first intervention consists in the virginal conception, another consists in giving birth in such a way that, by mysterious divine intervention, it does not take away the virginity of the one giving birth, but confirms and seals it--even increases it, as the Patristic and theological Tradition holds. Since Christ is purity in Person, His passage from the Mothers' womb to the external world does not blemish the virgin integrity of Mary, but, on the contrary, confirms and elevates it to a greater dignity, according to the assertion: that which is even purer (Christ) by passing through what is less so, does not render it less pure, but rather more so" or as St. Irenaeus writes, "The Son of God became the Son of man, the pure One opening purely that pure womb which regenerates men unto God, and which He Himself made pure" (Against the Heresies). And the Liturgy says that Christ "did not diminish His mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it" (Sacramentarium Gregorianum-Hadrianum, Votive Mass of Saint Mary:Prayer over Gifts. see Lumen Gentium #57). As for the virginitas post partum, it implies the fact that even after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived out their marriage in perfect continence. St. Francis de Sales wrote:

"Both has vowed to preserve their virginity for a lifetime; and here God wants them to be united by the bond of Holy Matrimony, not to make them yield or repent of their vow, but to confirm and fortify each other to preserve in their holy purpose; thus, they continued to live together in a virginal way for the rest of their lives" (Sermon on the Virtues of Saint Joseph)

Scriptural Note on Lk 1:34: "since I have no relation with [I do not know] a man?" The fact that Mary has not yet known Her husband. Mary implicitly attest to wanting to remain in a state of virginity: "At first sight, Mary's words would seem merely to express only Her present state of virginity: Mary would affirm that she does not 'know' man, that is, that She is a virgin.

Nevertheless, the context in which the question is asked: 'How can this be?,' and the affirmation that follows: 'since I do not know man,' emphasize both Mary's present virginity and

Her intention to remain a virgin. The expression She uses, with the verb in the present tense, reveals the permanence and continuity of Her state” John Paul II, General Audience, 7/24/96, #1. See St. Thomas S.T. III, q.28,a.4).

ASSUMPTION INTO HEAVEN

The fourth and, to this point, final dogma officially proclaimed by the Church is also the most recent: the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven “in soul and body,” at the end of Her earthly life. This doctrine, whose liturgical solemnity is celebrated on August 15, was defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950 [Munificentissimus Deus] The most traditional biblical foundation is Revelation 12:1, in which St. John sees a glorious women in Heaven, a symbol-according to the greater part of the Tradition--both of the Church and of Mary. The doctrine of the Assumption implies that the body of Mary did not undergo decay on earth and that it cannot be found on earth, because it was glorified with Her soul in Heaven St. John Damascene states:

“It was necessary that She, who in childbirth had kept Her virginity unharmed, also preserved Her body without any corruption after Her death. It was necessary that She, who had carried the Creator made child in Her womb, would dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was necessary after the Bride of the Father to live in the Heavenly mansions. It was necessary that She had seen Her Son on the cross, receiving in Her heart that sword of sorrow from would dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was necessary for the Bridge of the Father to live in the Heavenly mansions. It was necessary that She who had seen Her Son on the cross, receiving in Her heart that sword of sorrow from which She had been immune in giving birth to Him, would contemplate Him sitting at the right hand of the Father. It was necessary for the Mother of God to possess what belongs to Her Son and be honored by all creatures as Mother and Handmaid of God.”

There are various hypotheses concerning the passage of Mary from this world to the other.(1)There are those who hypothesize a death entirely equal to that of other human beings. On the other hand, there is the eastern conception which speaks of the Dormitio Mariae, the Dormition of Mary: the end of Our Lady’s earthly life would consist in falling into a sweet sleep, without knowing death as we experience it. We can cite a text of St. Gregory of Tours (d. 594), which, while speaking of the separation of the soul from the body (in this sense, a true death), narrates the final day of Mary in such a way as to show the extraordinary nature of Her passing away:

“Although the blessed Mary had already been called [to live apart] from the world, finally the passage of Her life was completed, and all the Apostles gathered from their particular regions at Her house. When they heard that She must be taken from the world, they all kept watch with Her. And behold, the Lord Jesus came with his angels, and after taking Her soul He gave it to the angel Michael and left. At dawn the Apostles lifted Her body on a bed, placed it in a tomb, and kept guard over it, in anticipation of the arrival of the Lord. And behold, again the Lord approached them. He took the holy body in a cloud and ordered it be brought to Paradise, where, after regaining Her soul, Mary now rejoices with His elect and enjoys the goodness of eternity that will never perish (De gloria beatorum martyrum 4, in Glory of the Martyrs. 1988). Beyond the narrative details (a delicate specification--”on the bed”--to emphasize that no one dared touch the body of the Virgin), this perspective is to be preferred to that which hypothesizes a common death for Mary, because it better corresponds to the role of Mary as New Eve: She “died” in the same way in which Eve would have “died” if she had not sinned. Death would not be marked by sin and by its consequences, and thus it would be a joyous passage to true life. Mary is without sin, and so She cannot die as we sinners do.

(2) It could be objected that Christ Himself experienced death though He too was without sin; and, unlike Mary, He was also God and not only a human. He experienced the most tormenting and agonizing of deaths. We may, however, respond to this objection by saying that Christ died not because He had to (as we sinners do: see Rom 6:23), but rather because He willed to (see Jn 10:17-18), and in this way He achieved our redemption from sin and death. He voluntarily let Himself be swallowed up by death, so that death could be destroyed from within. For Mary all this was unnecessary, because Christ is the Redeemer. She certainly participated in the work of redemption but in a different way.

(3) The Tradition of the faith developed the spirituality of Our Lady of Sorrows (liturgical memorial on September 15th), that is, our Lady who suffers the Son's suffering along with Him, not in Her body, but in Her spirit, in Her Immaculate Heart. A biblical foundation of this spirituality is the word of the elderly Simeon who welcomed Mary and Joseph in the Temple of Jerusalem when they brought the baby Jesus there for the first time. He prophesied to the Virgin: "and you yourself [your soul] a sword will pierce" (Lk 2:35). Several Western depictions of Our Lady of Sorrows show Her dressed in black, with a heart pierced by seven daggers: the number seven indicated perfections, thus Mary has suffered in the perfect way along with Her Son. But the sword, St. Simeon said, pierces the soul and not the body (as instead happens to Christ Jn 19:34). So while the Roman soldier strikes the physical heart of the Redeemer, tearing it open, the pain pierces the soul of Mary, sacrificial victim along with the unique Victim, the unique Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world: Christ. The Passion of Christ is in the soul (Mk 14:34) and in the body, and it is a perfect Passion; that of Mary is only in the soul and it is a participation of the Mother in the redeeming Passion of the Son. For this reason, suffering in the body is not part of the vocation of Mary: She did not die a martyr in the strict sense, even if Her sufferings were comparable to martyrdom, as St. Bernard of Clairvaux affirms [Mary was martyr "not by sword of the executioner, but by bitter sorrow of heart"]. And that is why, even if Christ wanted to die by partaking in our dark death to the maximum degree, it is not necessary for Mary to die in this way. On the contrary, at the end of Her life of continuous offering to the Lord, She fell asleep in God to rise with Her Son in the new life.

(4) Her resurrection was also corporeal, in the image of the Resurrection of Christ. And this fourth Marian dogma is also a consequence of the divine Maternity: just as the body of Christ, which is the body of the immortal Logos, could not remain in the sepulcher, so too the body that was the Tabernacle of the most High on earth could not know terrestrial corruption ["Rightly you would not allow Her to see the corruption if the tomb since from Her own body She marvelously brought forth your incarnate Son" [Preface Holy Mass Solemnity of the Assumption]]. For nine months Mary carried the Son of God, who received His body and blood from Her, That flesh and that blood, which have provided the material for the Incarnation of the Logos, could not decay in death. The light of the Risen Lord immediately illumined His Mother's journey towards the eternal Jerusalem. Thus, St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733), imagining the scene in which Jesus descends from Heaven to take His Mother, attributes these words to the Lord: "It is necessary that where I am, you too will be, a Mother inseparable from your Son. [Homilia III in Dormitionem] The implied biblical reference is to Jn 12:26: "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me." Nobody can ever serve the Lord better than the One who defined Herself as God's Handmaiden (Lk 1:38), which is why it is no surprise that the Father would have also honored Mary at the end of Her earthly existence, leading Her to be alongside Her Son in Heaven.

St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (d. 1787) in his famous work *The Glories of Mary*, enumerates and illustrates seven sorrows:

- (1) St. Simeon's Prophecy;
- (2) the flight of Jesus into Egypt;
- (3) the loss of Jesus in the Temple;
- (4) the meeting of Mary and Jesus when He was going to death;
- (5) the death of Jesus;
- (6) the piercing of the side of Jesus, and His descent from the cross;
- (7) the burial of Jesus

He also writes that "Mary is the Queen of Martyrs, for Her Martyrdom was longer and greater than that of all the Martyrs

Other Marian Titles

Aside from the four dogmas infallibly taught by the Church, she recognizes other titles and offices of the Mother of God. The fact that they have not yet been the subject of a solemn dogmatic definition does not imply that the Church does not consider these doctrines true, especially those that she has professed from time immemorial and that in some cases are also liturgically celebrated.

Mediatrix

Kindly design to hear us, O Mary! Jesus has placed in your hands all the treasures of His graces and His mercies"God in a completely free way, was pleased to entrust to Mary all of the treasures and graces that He gives human beings. God wills to render Mary, by grace, in some way omnipotent, not in the sense that She takes on divine omnipotence--that is impossible--but rather that Her prayer is never ineffective at the throne of God; and that God does not have to, but rather wants to pass all of His salutary influence on all human beings through Mary ["That which God can do by His power, that canst thou do by prayer, O sacred Virgin." St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*]. In regard to this Marian office too, like the fundamental dogma of the divine Maternity of Mary: God did not have to, but rather He wanted to be born of Her and save humanity by assuming, as a conjoined instrument, a human nature drawn from Her. Thus, God wants to continue to give grace to human beings through the hands of the One He has chosen to be His Mother forever:

"For all the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin on men originates, not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. In no way does it impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ"

[Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* #60]

Co-Redemptrix

In conclusion, among the many Marian offices and titles used by the Church, we shall consider one that is currently at the center of an intense debate among theologians: the title of Co-Redemptrix of mankind. The discussion does not focus on the objective content that the title conveys, but on the verbal expression.

When we speak of Marian co-redemption, the content refers to the cooperation of Mary in the Redemptive work of Christ, the only Mediator. There are no doubts about this. Here is the Second Vatican Council *Lumen Gentium* #56

"Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see Her as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, She "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for Herself and for the whole

human race” [Against the Heresies III, 22, 4]. Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert in their preaching, “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by Her faith”. Comparing Mary with Eve, they call Her “the Mother of the living.” (St. Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion, 78, 18) and still more they say: “death through Eve, life through Mary.”

Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way She cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore She is our Mother in the order of grace [LG#61].

This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cultics, until they are led into the happiness of their true home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator [LG #62].

The expression

On the basis of these texts of the most recent Council and other reasons, various theologians, bishops, and cardinals have for several decades have been protoning this for a future dogmatic definition of the Church may infallibly proclaim that the Virgin Mother of God is Co-Redemptrix along with the One Redeemer, Christ. Opposing theologians who instead do not call into question the cooperation of Mary in the work of the Son, but they believe that the title Co-Redemptrix is ambiguous and damaging from an ecumenical standpoint. They add that the Council did not use that term in the documents and that this Marian title has not been used by the Magisterium in important documents since the time of Pius XII.

Queen

We have already mentioned the role of Mary as Queen of the universe, with the liturgical memorial of August 22. This truth about Mary is celebrated in different ways in the prayer of Christians: (1) The fFifth Glorious Mystery of the prayer of the Rosary contemplates the Coronation of Mary in Heaven. (2) A famous ancient antiphon greets Mary with the words, *Salve, Regina*,”(“Hail, Holy Queen”), and another begins with the words “*Ave Regina coelorum*” (Hail, Queen of the Heavens”). (3) The Litany of Loreto contains different references to the regality of Mary: Queen of the angels, the patriarchs, the prophets, the Apostles, the martyrs, the confessors of the faith, the virgins, and all the saints. It continues, invoking Mary as Queen who was conceived without original sin, Queen assumed into Heaven, Queen of the holy Rosary, Queen of the family, and Queen of peace. (4) The prayer of the *Regina Coeli* (“Queen of Heaven”), which substitutes for the recital of the *Angelus* during the Easter Season. (5) The beginning of the Supplication to the Madonna of the Rosary of Pompeii, composed by Blessed Bartolo Longo (d. 1926), which calls Mary “OAugust Queen of Victories, O Sovereign of Heaven and Earth.

Other Children of Mary and Joseph?

Difficulties on this point have arisen that still persist to this day. In fact, the Gospels speak in some passages of brothers and sisters of Jesus (cf. Mk 6:3; Mt 12:47). How should these passages be interpreted? The Catholic response is that wherever Scripture uses the term “brothers,” the reader should read “cousins.” because in the language used by Jesus and the Apostles (Aramaic and occasionally Hebrew), there are not two distinct words to indicate these categories of persons. The words “brother” and “sister,” therefore, also indicate cousins. The Eastern churches and some Protestants have a different opinion.

The Eastern Churches recognize the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God and so they do not hypothesize the existence of true brothers and sisters of Jesus. Nonetheless, they do not grasp the above -mentioned nuance of meaning of the terms brothers and sisters and this claim they are half-brothers and half-sisters, namely sons and daughters of St. Joseph from a previous marriage of which he remained the widower, thus being able to be married again to Mary. This hypothesis, however, in addition to not respecting the mentality or context that is the background of the Gospels (that of the Semitic use of the words, even if the texts are written in Greek), is compelled to introduce a presumed marriage of St. Joseph, about which the sources of Revelation say nothing.

Some Protestant groups, who consider their hypothesis to be more faithful to the biblical text, affirm instead that the brothers and sisters of Jesus of which the Gospel speaks would be true brothers and sisters, born after Christ, within a normal practice of marriage between Joseph and Mary [This is the claim of the Anabaptists and many Protestant authors of our time. The early Protestants and Anglicans believed the doctrine of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary]. But this opinion has at least two weak points : 1), just like the Eastern Churches, it does not respect the biblical text, which it intends to defend; 2) this opinion does not have any corroboration in the Fathers and the great theologians before Protestantism itself. Regarding the first of the two weak points, if the Gospels are viewed in their totality, there are important details that neither the Eastern nor the Protestant these can explain: (a) the total absence of references to brothers and sisters of Jesus in the Infancy Narrative; (b) the fact that Mary is always called the “Mother of Jesus,” but never the mother of any of those who the Gospels also called brothers and sisters of Him; (3) that St. Joseph is called father of the Child and it is specified that he was in the sense that the people understand him to be so, but it is never said that he was the father of those other persons who, according to the Eastern and Protestants, would be his children; and (4) the fact that Jesus on the Cross entrusts Mary to a disciple (John), which there would be no need to do if He had brothers and sisters, who certainly would have taken care of Her.

We can conclude with a text of Pope Paul IV (d. 1559):

“[The opinion is condemned according to which] the same (Lord) was not, according to the flesh, conceived in the womb of the most blessed and ever Virgin Mary, conceived in the womb of the most blessed and ever Virgin Mary by (the power of) the Holy Spirit but, like other men, from the seed of Joseph...or that the same most blessed Virgin Mary is not the true Mother of God and did not always persist in the integrity of virginity, namely, before giving birth, in giving birth, and perpetually after giving birth” [ante partum, in partu et perpetua post partum] (Paul IV, Cum Quorundam Hominum (1555).

Further reflection and historical note: The claim about the children of St. Joseph is not found in Scripture, but only in apocryphal writings, such as the Protoevangelium of James (second century), which has the intent of defending the Virginity of Mary and thus represents Joseph as an old widower, thus implying that, while going into a new marriage with Mary, he was no

longer capable of consummating the marriage. The claim is then taken up again by the apocryphal History of Joseph the Carpenter, a text that cannot be dated before the sixth century. The fancifulness of this writing emerges clearly when reading it. A single example: it is said that St. Joseph died at the age of 111, working until the last day. The day of his death is identified with the 26th of the month of Epep (or Abib) (July 20), a detail that reveals the influence of Egyptian religious beliefs, since the “resurrection” of Osiris was celebrated on the 26th of Epep. St. Jerome refutes the hypothesis of St. Joseph other children in *Adversus Helvidium* #21.

