

On November 21, 1964, at the close of the third session of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI dedicated the following words to the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Neither Russia or Russian people are mentioned. There is a paragraph mentioning Fatima, whereby neither the word consecration or derivative, or, the Immaculate Heart are written. Paul VI never asked all the bishops of the world to join him. Notice the second to the last paragraph, whereby he recommends the entire human race.

1964 Act of Consecration

Our thought, Venerable Brothers, cannot but rise with sentiments of sincere and filial gratitude to the Holy Virgin. Also, to her whom We like to regard as the Protectress of the present Council, the witness of Our toil, Our most kindly adviser, because it is to her, as a heavenly patron, together with St. Joseph, that the work of our Ecumenical Assembly was entrusted by Pope John XXIII right from the start.

Moved by these same sentiments, last year we offered to the Most Blessed Mary a solemn act of common homage, by gathering in the Liberian Basilica, round the image venerated with the glorious title of *Salus Populi Romani* (Salvation of the Roman people.)

Most Exalted Position

This year, the homage of our Council appears much more precious and significant. By the promulgation of today's Constitution, which has as its crown and summit a whole chapter dedicated to Our Lady, we can rightly affirm that the present session ends as an incomparable hymn of praise in honor to Mary. It is the first time, in fact—and saying it fills our souls with profound emotion—that an Ecumenical Council presents such a vast synthesis of the Catholic Doctrine regarding the place which the Blessed Mary occupies in the mystery of Christ and of the Church. This corresponds to the aim which this Council set itself of manifesting the countenance of the Holy Church, to which Mary is closely linked, and of which, as it has been authoritatively affirmed, she is *portio maxima, portio optima, portio praecipua, portio electissima* [greatest, finest, principal, most elect part].

Our Lord's Will

Truly, the reality of the Church is not exhausted in its Hierarchical structure, in its Liturgy, in its Sacraments, in its Juridical Ordinances. The intimate, the primary source of its sanctifying effectiveness is to be sought in its Mystic Union with Christ; a union which we cannot conceive as separate from her who is the Mother of the

Word Incarnate and whom Jesus Christ Himself wanted closely united to Himself for our salvation.

Thus the loving contemplation of the marvels worked by God in His Holy Mother must find its proper perspective in the vision of the Church. And knowledge of the true Catholic Doctrine on Mary will always be a key to the exact understanding of the mystery of Christ and of the Church.

Fullfillment Of A Wish

Meditation on these close relationships between Mary and the Church, so clearly established in today's Conciliar Constitution, makes Us feel that this is the most Solemn and appropriate moment to fulfill a wish which, after We mentioned it at the end of the preceding session very many Council Fathers made their own, pressing for an explicit declaration at this Council of the motherly role of the Virgin among the Christian people.

To achieve this aim, We have felt it opportune to Consecrate in this very public Session a title which was suggested in honor of the Virgin from various parts of the Catholic world and which is particularly dear to us because it sums up in an admirable synthesis the privileged position reorganized by the Council for the Virgin in the Holy Church.

“Mother Of The Church”

Therefore, for the glory of the Virgin Mary and for Our own consolation, We proclaim the Most Blessed Mary Mother of the Church, that is to say of all the people of God, of the faithful as well as of the Pastors, who call her the most loving Mother. And We wish that the Mother of God should be still more honored and invoked by the entire Christian people by this most sweet title.

This is a title, Venerable Brothers, not new to Christian piety; it is precisely by this title, in preference to all others, that the faithful and the Church address Mary. It truly is part of the genuine substance of devotion to Mary, finding its justification in the very dignity of the Mother of the Word Incarnate.

Basis: Divine Maternity

Just as, in fact, the Divine Maternity is the basis for her special relationship with Christ, and for her presence in the economy of salvation brought about by Jesus Christ, thus it also constitutes the principal basis for the relations between Mary and the Church, since she is the mother of Him Who, right from the time of His Incarnation in her virginal bosom, joined to Himself as head of His Mystical Body which is the Church.

Mary, then as Mother of Christ, is mother also of all the faithful and of all the Pastors.

It is therefore with a soul full of trust and filial love that We raise Our glance to her, despite Our unworthiness and weakness. She, who has given Us in Jesus the fountainhead of grace, will not fail to succor the Church, now flourishing through the abundance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and setting herself with new zeal to the fulfillment of its mission of salvation.

Yet Close To Us

And Our trust is even more lively and fully corroborated if We consider the very close links between this heavenly Mother of Ours and mankind. Although adorned by God with the riches of admirable prerogatives, to make her a worthy Mother of the Word Incarnate, she is nevertheless very close to us.

Daughter of Adam, like ourselves, and therefore our sister through ties of nature, she is, however, the creature who was preserved from Original Sin in view of the merits of the Savior, and who possesses besides the privileges obtained the personal virtue of a total and exemplary faith, thus deserving the evangelical praise *beata quae credidisti* (blessed art thou who believe). In her earthly life, she realized the perfect image of the disciple of Christ, reflected every virtue, and incarnated the evangelical beatitudes proclaimed by Christ. Therefore in her, the entire Church, in its incomparable variety of life and of work, attains the most authentic form of the perfect imitation of Christ.

“Render Due Honor”

We trust then, that with the Promulgation of the Constitution on the Church, sealed by the Proclamation of Mary as Mother of the Church, that is to say of all the faithful and all the Pastors, the Christian people may, with greater ardor, turn to the Holy Virgin and render to her the honor and devotion due to her.

As for Ourselves, just as at the invitation of Pope John XXIII We entered the Council hall, along with “Mary, the Mother of Jesus,” so at the close of the third session We leave this Temple with the most holy and sweet name of Mary, Mother of the Church.

As a sign of gratitude for her loving assistance, lavished on Us during this last conciliar period, let each of you, Venerable Brothers, pledge himself to hold high among the Christian people the name and the honor of Mary, indicating in her the model of faith and of the full response to any call from God, the model of the full

assimilation of the searching of Christ and of His charity, so that all the faithful, united in the name of the common Mother, may feel themselves ever more firmly rooted in the Faith and in union with Jesus Christ, and at the same time fervent in charity toward the brothers, promoting love for the poor, dedication to justice and defense of peace.

As the great St. Ambrose exhorted: *ait in singulis Mariæ anima ut magnificet Dominum; sit in singulis spiritus Mariæ et exultet in Deo* [Let the soul of Mary be in individuals, that it may magnify the Lord; let the spirit of Mary be in individuals, that it may rejoice in the Lord].

A Means, Not An End

Above all, We desire that it should be made clear that Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, exists only in relation to God and to Christ, our sole Mediator and Redeemer.

And likewise, may the true nature and the aims of the Marian veneration in the Church be illustrated, particularly where there are many separated brothers, so that those who are not part of the Catholic Community may understand that devotion to Mary, far from being an end in itself, is instead a means essentially ordained to orient souls to Christ and thus unite them with the Father in the love of the Holy Ghost.

Special Mention: Fatima

While We turn in ardent prayer to the Virgin, that she may bless the Ecumenical Council and the entire Church, hastening the hour of union of all Christians, Our glance opens on the endless horizons of the whole world, the object of the most lively care of the Ecumenical Council, and which Our venerated predecessor, Pius XII of venerated memory, not without inspiration from on high, solemnly Consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Today, We consider it particularly opportune to recall this act of Consecration. Bearing this in mind, We have decided to send a special mission to Fatima in the near future in order to carry the Golden Rose to the sanctuary of Fatima, more dear than ever not only to the people of the noble Portuguese nation—always, but particularly today, dear to Us—but also known and venerated by the faithful throughout the entire Catholic world. In this manner We intend to entrust to the care of this heavenly Mother the entire human family, with its problems and anxieties, with its legitimate aspirations and ardent hopes.

The Holy Father's Plea To Mary

O, Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to you We recommend the entire Church and Our Ecumenical Council!

You *Auxilium Episcoporum*, aid of Bishops, protect and assist the Bishops in their Apostolic Mission, and all those Priests, Religious and laymen, who help them in their arduous work.

You who were presented by your Son Himself, at the moment of His redeeming Death, as Mother to His best-loved Disciple, remember the Christian people who entrust themselves to you.

Remember all your sons, support their prayers to God, preserve their faith, strengthen their hope, increase their charity.

Remember those who are in tribulation, in need, in danger and particularly those who suffer persecution and who are in prison because of their faith. For these, O Virgin, obtain fortitude and hasten the desired day of just freedom.

Look with benign eyes on our separated brothers and condescend to unite us, you who brought forth Christ as a bridge of unity between God and men.

O, temple of light without shadow and without blemish, intercede with your only Son, Mediator of our reconciliation with the Father that He may have mercy on Our shortcomings and may dispel any difference between us, giving us the joy of loving.

To your Immaculate Heart, O Mary, we finally recommend the entire human race. Lead it to the knowledge of the sole and true Savior, Jesus Christ; protect it from the scourges provoked by sin, give to the entire world peace in truth, in justice, in liberty and in love.

And let the entire Church, by celebrating this great Ecumenical Assembly, raise to the God of mercy the majestic hymn of praise and thanksgiving, the hymn of joy and of exultation, because the Lord has worked great things through you, O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary.