

“Stella Maris”



Before the time of GPS and even light houses, sailors were in a very precarious situation when it came to navigating the dark night-time seas. They knew where they wanted to go, they wanted the safe harbor, but due to the darkness, they didn't know if they were on target. Complicating matters, the waves of the rough sea were constantly pushing and knocking them off course. What possibly could help them? What could they rely on be a true source of navigation during these treacherous adventures? There was one constant, and that was the star of the sea. Sailors would use the night time stars to verify their location, to set target, and to proceed with confidence. They knew that although they get pushed around by the waves and they can't see what is immediately ahead of them, the star never lies and only leads in one direction. All they had to do was set course according to the star, and they were assured that a safe harbor awaited them.

This nautical usage of the night time stars was appropriated by early Christians to refer to our blessed mother Mary. Christians knew that they too had an ultimate destination/goal, they knew that this life knocked them around, that they can easily get off course, that it was not easy navigating this fallen world, and so they too looked for the one constant. The one constant source to and from which they could reorient themselves when lost, to follow, and to have complete confidence in the final destination that it leads. That one constant, that Star of the precarious “waters” of this life, is Mary. As Christians, we turn to Mary for three essential reasons: (1) to have the perfect model of discipleship, (2) to understand Christ more fully, and (3) for her maternal intercession. In other words, we look to Mary to lead us to Jesus our savior!

With this fundamental understanding in mind, early Christians looked for helpful ways to focus on this “Star.” Many methods and prayers have emerged, but perhaps none is more significant than the prayer of the Rosary. From its slow and calming methodology, to its deep content grounded in Scripture and the core mysteries of our salvation, this prayer is essentially akin to turning on the GPS in our car. It's designed to present that Star to us. For example, Pope Paul VI spoke of the Rosary as a “compendium of the entire Gospel.” The venerable Fulton Sheen once famously said: “If you wish to convert anyone to the fullness of the knowledge of Our Lord and of His Mystical Body, then teach him the Rosary. One of two things will happen. Either he will stop saying the Rosary, or he will get the gift of faith.” Sheen's point is that the Rosary, by its meditative nature, does not permit a soul to remain in a state of lukewarmness. It forces a decision and a change of heart, in one of two directions.

While obviously the Rosary is important in itself, it is particularly significant for us in the Diocese of Toledo, as our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary is both the patroness of our Diocese and of our Cathedral. In fact, our Cathedral will have its 100th anniversary of the laying of its cornerstone on June 27, 2026. In anticipation of that anniversary, and considering that we will be celebrating the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary on October 7, I will be offering a new bulletin series on the Rosary starting this weekend. To fully appreciate this prayer, we will need to understand Mary first: how is she seen in the Bible, and to establish a proper theological understanding of her. From there, we will look at the Rosary itself: what do the prayers mean, what are the Mysteries about and how are they beautifully depicted in the vaults of our Cathedral.

Kindly note that on October 7, as has been our custom on that day, the Cathedral will have a public recitation of the Rosary at 6:30pm with Mass afterwards at 7:00pm. Bishop Thomas is the celebrant and also invites another prelate to join him. This year it will be his Eminence, Cardinal Sean Patrick O'Malley, Archbishop Emeritus of Boston. You are all welcome to join us on October 7! For now, let me just conclude by saying: if you feel “lost,” if you feel life is not going the way you want, if you feel you have been knocked around by the “waves” of this fallen world, then look towards the Star of the Sea and may our journey with the Rosary let that Star shine bright in your life!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“I will put enmity between you and the woman” Gn 3:15

As we begin our exploration into our understanding of Mary and then the Rosary, the best starting place is the Bible itself. In particular, we will begin where the Bible begins: the Old Testament. In general, the Old Testament conveys what our Lord’s original plan was, how it went wrong through human sin, and then a yearning for our Lord to set things right again. This latter point is fulfilled with Christ in the New Testament, and so the entire nature of the Old Testament is an anticipation of Christ himself. In other words, you cannot understand the Old Testament correctly if you don’t read it in light of the New Testament. Consequently, Christians have always seen certain Old Testament figures and scenes as prefigurements of Christ. For example, just as Moses led the Israelites out of slavery and into the promised land, so does Jesus lead us from this fallen world of sin into the promised land of heaven. Since the Old Testament anticipates Christ, do we also see evidence of an anticipation of Mary?

The answer is clearly yes. There are some passages that have definite connections while others have an allusion to Mary. The first definite connection is the scene after the Fall, **Genesis 3:15**, which is often called the “*proto-Gospel*” (or “first good news”) of the Bible. Here, God address the serpent and makes the following claim: “I will put enmity between you and the *woman*, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.” The question is: who is God referring to? Certainly in the immediate context the only man and woman is Adam and Eve; however, we never hear of Adam striking at the serpent’s head. Is God mistaken? Or, is our Lord actually referring to another man who will ultimately strike the serpent (i.e. Jesus)? Clearly our Lord does not make mistakes and Jesus is the man who will defeat the evil one. Regarding the woman, Eve is never seen as the one who has complete enmity between herself and the serpent...in fact she befriended the serpent. The only woman who experienced this enmity fully was Mary. Thus, right away in the Bible, we anticipate this woman who has complete separation from the serpent, and thus will allow our Lord’s plan to unfold.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the *virgin* shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” This passage, too, has both its immediate meaning, but also its fuller meaning. Regarding the former, the people of Israel were in need of a miracle, a messiah. The nation of Israel underwent a civil war in 922 B.C. and consequently the north separated from the south. In 722 B.C. the north was invaded and conquered by the forging nation of Assyria, and now they are looking to do the same thing to the south...hence, the people feel helpless and this is when this prophecy is given. In terms of a fuller sense, we live in a fallen world and can feel helpless with what life throws at us. We too need a messiah...and so when Jesus was born, St. Matthew said that the prophecy of Isaiah was finally fulfilled: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet” (Mt 1:22). If Jesus then is the Immanuel of the Isaiah prophecy, that makes Mary the virgin.

Micah 5:1-3 “But you, Bethlehem...from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel... therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when *she* who is to give birth has borne...and he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure.” The prophet Micah, who is a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah, also anticipates a powerful ruler. As with Isaiah, there is the immediate meaning, but also the fuller meaning. Regarding the latter, it is only Christ who gives us complete security, and thus is the ruler ultimately envisioned. In turn, the woman who gave birth to this ruler is Mary.

There are many other Old Testament passages with allusions to Mary, as well as women who prefigure her (e.g. Sarah, Rebekah, Miriam, Hannah, Esther, Deborah, and Judith). In fact, we will see in Art. 4 how the Evangelist Matthew will highlight four women as foreshadows of Mary. For now, it is safe to say, the Old Testament is anticipating an important role for a virgin-mother.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



Rebecca, Eve, and Ruth from “The Prophetic and Imitative Figures of Mary” located in the balcony of Rosary Cathedral.

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman” Gal 4:4

In the world of Biblical Studies, there a common interest in knowing when the text was originally written, because that in turn will help to explain the context of the text as well. This is by no means a settled issue, but the majority of Biblical scholars would argue that Paul’s letters were written first (50s-70sA.D.), the gospel of Mark around 70A.D., the gospels of Luke (as well as his Acts of the Apostles) and Matthew around 80A.D., and then the gospel of John (as well as his three letters and the book of Revelation) around 90A.D. and after. If this is in fact the case, an interesting corollary emerges: *As time passes, the interest in Mary grows*. The following is where Mary can be found in the author’s respective texts:

Paul: Gal 4:4

Mark: 3:31-35; 6:1-3

Matthew: *Genealogy* 1:1-16 ; *Birth* 1:18-25; *Magi* 2:1-12; *Flight to Egypt* 2:13-23; 12:46-50; Mt 13:55

Luke: *Annunciation* 1:26-38; *Visitation* 1:39-56; *Birth* 2:1-14; *Shepherds* 2:15-20; *Presentation* 2:22-38; *in the Temple* 2:41-52 3:23 (allusion to Mary); 8:19-21; Acts 1:14

John: 2:1-12; 6:42 19:25-27; Rev 12

Early Christians first saw Jesus as human, and then began to believe He is in fact God, and then had to rediscover how Jesus is still also human. If Jesus was not human, it calls to question the effectiveness of His salvific ministry, because how can He redeem something that He is not apart of? This actually led to the Church condemning groups that denied Jesus’s full humanity (e.g. Docetism, Apollinarianism). Due to this concern of Jesus’ humanity, we see the interest in Mary grow as she is the source and link to humanity. Thus, Paul just speaks of Jesus of being born of a woman (probably late 50s A.D.), and then Matthew and Luke make the point to include the entire infancy narrative of Jesus to more fully demonstrate His identity as God and Man. In other words, Mary helps to explain the significance of who Jesus is and why that is important for us (cf. Art. 1...one of the three reasons for turning towards Mary)!

In regard to the specific passages above, a number of these will be addressed in the specific mystery of the Rosary in which they are commemorated, and the passages of John we will examine in Art. 4. For now, I will draw our attention to two passages, beginning with the *Genealogies of Jesus*. The Gospels contain two genealogies: Luke’s 3:23-38 that begins with Jesus and contexts him with the first man (i.e. Adam), and Matthew’s 1:1-16 that begins with King David and then proceeds towards Jesus. While both genealogies are crafted in their unique way to speak theological truths about the significance of Jesus to their immediate intended audience, they both also convey theological insights about Mary. With Luke’s phrase “He was the son, as was thought, of Joseph,” clearly he is indicating Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus, as was described in the preceding chapters. In Matthew’s genealogy, he includes the names of five women (i.e. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary). This is unprecedented in the Old Testament, because only the father’s name was listed to explain one’s lineage. Thus, Matthew is intentional because these four Old Testament women help point towards to Mary. In particular, these four women, despite their irregular marriages, were a channel for the achievement of the messianic plan...so too and even more so with Mary.

The second passage, commonly called the *True Family of Jesus*, has Jesus himself clarify who His real mother is (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 8:19-21). The scene speaks of His mother being present, Jesus responding that His “mother” is actually the one who does the will of God. At first glance this certainly seems dismissive of the person Mary, and raises the question of why we focus on her if Jesus himself did not? However, this is not a careful reading of the text because Mary in addition to being Jesus’ biological mother, is the perfect embodiment of one who does the will of God. Perhaps St. Augustine said it best: “Indeed, the holy Mary obviously did the will of the Father: and therefore it is greater for Mary to have been Christ’s disciple than to have been his Mother...The truth of Christ is in the mind of Mary, the flesh of Christ in her womb; greater is what she bears in her mind than what she bears in her womb.”



*“The Hidden Life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph”
Dual carving located in the vestibule of Rosary Cathedral*

***“Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth”
Rev 12:4***

Last week we took our first look at Mary in the New Testament, in particular through the lens of Saints Paul, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Today, we look at her through the lens of St. John. John is thought to be the last of the New Testament writers, and he has a more theological rather than chronological approach...in other words, he wants to explain who Jesus is and not simply retell stories about Him. The implications that this has for Mary is that John only includes three scenes of her, each of which are deep in theological significance, and each of these scenes can only be found in his writings. They are: *The Wedding Feast of Cana*, *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, and the *Woman and the Dragon*. We will address *The Wedding Feast of Cana* in art. 35, as that is the 2nd Luminous Mystery. For now, we will direct our attention to the other two.

Mary at the Foot of the Cross: “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (Jn 19:26-27). The Passion of St. John’s Gospel is read every Good Friday in both the Novus Ordo and Extraordinary Form, and among its unique features is this encounter between Jesus, John (the beloved disciple), and Mary (in fact, this scene is depicted in the statues of the high altar at St. Adalbert’s and in the 5th Sorrowful Mystery at the Cathedral). As already stated, there is always symbolic depth to John’s passages, and this scene is no exception. Recall in art. 2 that we heard of a “woman” in Genesis who will have complete enmity from the evil one. In a real sense, this woman will be a start-over from the first mother, Eve; thus, this new woman will be a 2nd Eve, and 2nd mother to all humanity that will allow our Lord’s plan to unfold. Interesting at Cana and here, Jesus refers to Mary, not by her name, but by the title “woman”...connecting Mary to that woman envisioned in Genesis 3. This deeper understanding is even suggested by how she is introduced (i.e. “behold”), because the other times that John uses this phrase (cf. 1:29-30, 12:15, 19:5, and 19:14) it introduces statements of profound transcendental theological meaning. Finally, this understanding of Mary of being the spiritual mother of all disciples and thus the Church, is also demonstrated by scene itself, for she is given to be the mother of John. By doing so, Jesus is revealing a spiritual relationship between Himself and John, with Mary as their mutual mother. As mentioned in art. 1, one of the three fundamental reasons that we turn to Mary is because of her maternal intercession...that reason is rooted in this scene! The question is, will we, like the beloved disciple, bring her into our homes?

Woman and the Dragon. In the last book of the Bible, John provides a symbolic and theological vision of all history (what was, what is, and what will be). It’s a message of the unfolding of God’s salvific plan, the powers that thwart the plan, and what this means for us. After he set the stage of how things went wrong, his book enters into the section of the Church’s story / role in this salvific plan (11:14 – 14:20). This hinge point will redirect the fallen direction towards judgment, salvation, and Christ’s ultimate victory. Within this hinge section, the 12th chapter reveals the principle spiritual antagonist: the red dragon with ten horns and seven diadems (the red color reveals his violent character, horns indicate his power, diadems represent kingly rule, the numbers reflect completeness) who is the ancient serpent of Genesis (v. 9). Here, he seeks out a “woman” (again think of the “woman” of Genesis 3), who just gave birth to a son that is “destined to rule all the nations” (v. 5) (i.e. Jesus). Now, the red dragon already lost the decisive battle in Heaven against St. Michael and his angels (vv. 7-9), but he is still active on earth and in pursuit of the woman who is in the “desert” (the desert points to the time of Israelites journey to the promised land, and is symbolic of all people’s journey to heaven). The red dragon is unable to catch her because she moves with the “wings of the great eagle” (v. 14). This is an image from the prophet Isaiah who said that those who anchor their hope in the Lord, will in turn operate gracefully in this fallen world as if with “eagles’ wings” due to God’s grace (Is 40:31). In other words, Mary operates gracefully in this desert period and is untouched by the devil because she is completely rooted in our Lord. Out of anger that he can’t capture the woman, he now seeks her “offspring” (v.17) ...the symbol for you and I. The question becomes for us: Will we follow our mother’s lead and gracefully out-step the red dragon, allowing her to protect us as she protected the Christ child, or do we dare to take another path?

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*St. John from “
The New Testament Writers”
located along the sanctuary wall
in Rosary Cathedral.*

***“Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah”
(MT 1:16)***

After our brief exploration through the Scriptures in articles 2 – 4, it is clear that the sacred authors had a keen awareness of Mary’s role in God’s plan to set right the fallen world (i.e. Salvation History). While Scripture does not provide a systematic theological treatment of Mary (i.e. Mariology), it does provide the fundamental principles that can lead to a proper understanding of her. It is essential to notice, as Scripture consistently emphasizes, that Mary’s significance is never seen in opposition to Christ. Rather, she is sought after because of her relationship to Him...she leads us to Him. This idea was suggested in article 3 for why there was a growing interest in Mary through the New Testament authors and the early Church. While the early Church began to accept Jesus as their savior, the natural question associated with this reality is: How does this work? How does Jesus save me? What is it about Jesus that makes this possible? As we saw in articles 5 and 6 on the “Mass,” it is essential to our salvation that Jesus is both God and man...“God” so that He has the power to save, and “man” so that He can work on our behalf. But, how is it possible that Jesus is God and at the same time man?

This core question created much dispute between the early Christians, and led to the Church’s need for “ecumenical councils.” These were gatherings of the Church’s leaders to address such thorny topics and help assure a common understanding, and thus communion amongst each other. For example, the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., led to the Nicene Creed that we still use today. However, some Christians still struggled to see that Jesus was fully human as well as fully God. The Church will ultimately declare that Jesus is one person with two natures (called the hypostatic union between the human and divine nature). To emphasize this reality, the Church declared the first of four Marian dogmas at the Council of Ephesus 431 A.D., that Mary is the **“Mother of God.”** The council called Mary, in Greek, the *Theotokos*, meaning “God-bearer.” This title was already circulating among the early churches, and the first known mention of it was by St. Hippolytus of Rome in 235. This title reflects that Mary conceived and brought forth, in His human nature, Jesus who is God from all eternity. This does not mean that Jesus is God by the fact that He is conceived and born of Mary. Jesus’ divinity is directly from the Father, which was the case for all eternity (cf. Jn 1:1). However, Jesus’ humanity came about at a certain moment in time. Since the eternal 2nd person of the Trinity took on flesh from Mary, it is accurate to say that she is the Mother of God.

As stated in article 1, one of the reasons we look to Mary is to better understand Christ. The title “Mother of God” does precisely that as it helps to fully explain the mystery of our Lord’s incarnation (i.e. the mystery of God taking on our flesh in order to redeem us). However, as also stated in article 1, another reason we look to Mary is because she provides the perfect model of discipleship. This title creates a very practical and pressing question for us: If we want perfect communion with our Lord so that we can experience the fullness of His graces in our lives, what was it about Mary that allowed her to experience this perfect communion and consequently the fullness of grace? Was she randomly chosen, or was there something about her that made her prone to this experience? If the latter, are we emulating that right now?

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*“The Nativity”
above the St. Joseph Shrine
Rosary Cathedral*

“The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” IS 7:14

Another closely held Marian doctrine is her perpetual virginity...both before and after the birth of Christ. To appreciate this teaching, it will be helpful to consider the Scripture evidence, its presence in tradition, and its overall significance. Beginning with Scripture, the reality is that there is no evidence against Mary’s virginity in the Bible, and what may appear to be contrary evidence actually reflects a difference in language/terminology. For example, Luke says “Mary gave birth to her firstborn son” (2:7). One may argue that use of the phrase “firstborn” implies a distinction from another birth; however, the phrase is simply a legal one reflecting the legal prescriptions concerning the first male child of a family, and not intending to imply other children. In addition, one may point to Matthew where he says “Joseph had no relations with [Mary] at any time before she bore a Son, Jesus” (1:25). One may say that is only referring to the time “before.” While that is true, it must also be kept in mind that the Semitic locution “before” or “until” does not imply a judgement about the future like it does in English. For example, “Michal was childless until the day of her death” (2 Sm 6:23). Finally, many will point to the passages that speak of the “brothers of Jesus” (cf. Mt 13:55). On the one hand in Matthew’s gospel, these “brothers (e.g. James and Joseph) are actually the sons of another Mary expressly named latter in the gospel (27:56). On the other hand, it must be kept in mind in the Semitic world there were not a multitude of terms to distinguish relationships between biological brothers, cousins, close friends. The term “brother” was often given to any relative or confederate. For example, Abraham said to his nephew Lot: “We are brothers” (Gn 13:8). Perhaps one positive piece of evidence for Mary’s virginity was already hinted to in article 4, where we saw Jesus entrusting His mother to John at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25-27); seemingly, this implies that Mary had no other child to care for her.

In addition to Scripture providing no reason to deny Mary’s virginity, we also see the early Christians adopt this understanding of Mary quickly. Perhaps one of the more unique examples comes from the Protoevangelium, or “Gospel” of James, written approximately 50 years after the last book of the Bible (150-200 A.D.). This is a non-canonical text, meaning it is not understood to be divinely inspired; however, it does provide some insight to mindset of early Christians. It speaks to the birth of Mary, her marriage to Joseph and ultimately the birth of Jesus. It says at the time of the marriage, Joseph was old and already a widower with several children; thus, there was no interest in beginning a natural family with Jesus. Of course we don’t hold to those details; nonetheless, notice the sensitivity of this author to emphasize the virginity of Mary. Beyond this text, the Church Fathers are consistent in their ardent defense of this doctrine (e.g. Origen in 254, then in general Sts. Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine). In 390, the first explicit ecclesiastical formulation is in the letter of the Synod of Milan to Pope Siricius. By the way, the leading Protestant reformers of the 16th century (e.g. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin) asserted and preached Mary’s perpetual virginity.

Nonetheless, there remains the obvious question: What is the significance of this doctrine? Admittedly this is a multivariant symbol, and thus you will see authors ascribe different meanings. Nonetheless, there are two fundamental significant realities that Mary’s virginity reflects from which the other meanings build upon. First, her virginity reflects God’s absolute initiative in the Incarnation. No one caused Jesus to come into world; rather, it was the Father who sent His son in the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4). Just as it was God who took the complete initiative to form the first Adam (Gn 2:7), so too did he do so with the “new Adam” who is to usher in a new creation (Rom 5:12-21). The second fundamental significance of Mary’s virginity is that it is a sign of her undivided gift of self to God’s will. Mary completely reserved herself to our Lord and was consumed by His will. This core disposition of Mary was reflected in her response to the angel Gabriel, “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word,” and seen in her actions all the way to the foot of the cross on Golgotha. In turn, Mary’s virginity reminds us to keep turning our lives over to our Lord, to trust in His love and providence, to be mindful of those areas where we hesitate and resist...if we follow Mary’s lead, it just leads to a new creation that only our Lord can confect.

“Hail, full of grace” LK 1:28

The next Marian doctrine to consider is the Immaculate Conception. This doctrine teaches that in anticipation of her motherhood of Jesus, there were two inseparable aspects of her holiness. One is negative: she has been preserved from all sin, both original and personal; the other is positive: she was made full of grace. If sin is the antithesis of all that is holy, it is only logical that the flesh from whom the 2nd person of Trinity would be incarnated would be perfectly inline with God. Both of these aspects were a reality for Mary since the moment of conception. Regarding the preservation from original sin, this was the Father’s choice. Original Sin is a stain from the first disobedience of Adam of Eve, and it has effects in our lives. Particularly, our desires are disordered...we want things that are not in our best interest, and it leads to more sin. Mary was preserved from this; however, that does not mean that she didn’t have free will. Like Adam and Eve who were created without Original Sin, they had free will; but unlike them, Mary chose to be faithful. This leads to the preservation from personal sin, which was her choice. While she did not have disordered desires like us and was filled with our Lord’s grace, she nonetheless had free will...and at every moment of her life she chose to be with our Lord. The final aspect, full of grace, was a result of both God’s choice and Mary’s cooperation. Grace is essentially God’s divine life in our soul. It creates a communion between us and our Lord, and it assists us as we navigate this life. It (i.e. “Sanctifying” grace...there is different ways to classify God’s gift of Himself, but this is a series of articles for another day) begins as a gift from God; however, for it to continue in our lives requires our acceptance and cooperation. This doctrine teaches that Mary was infused with sanctifying grace at the movement of her conception; but, even when she reached the age of reason, she continued to cooperate with it, allowing its effects to blossom in her life.

Historically speaking, this doctrine is the outcome of a long process. Scripture does not speak of Mary’s conception, but certain details point to it. We saw in Art. 2 that Gen 3:15 speaks of a complete enmity between the “woman” and the serpent. At the Annunciation, Gabriel said Mary was “full of grace” (Lk 1:28) and at the Visitation, Elizabeth said “blessed are you among woman.” All of these details reveal the unique nature of Mary, but the question remains: What is this uniqueness and when did it begin? Certainly, the Church Fathers were adamant in their defense of Mary’s holiness. For example, St. Augustine said: “The honor of Christ forbids the least hesitation on the subject of possible sin by His Mother.” However, the first explicit statement about the Immaculate Conception seemed to come from the East by the theologian Theoteknos of Libya (550-650 A.D.). By the 7th century, the liturgical feast of the Immaculate Conception was celebrated in many churches of the East. This was not the case in the West as theologians delved into the questions of original sin (i.e. a hereditary trait transmitted at conception to descendants of Adam) and the exact nature of the privilege given to Mary. Latin theology was firm on two principles: (a) every human being is infected with original sin, and (b) this hereditary sin is remitted through the merits of Christ as the Redeemer of the entire human race. Thus, how could Mary not be without original sin since she is human, and wouldn’t this demean role of Christ as the Redeemer of all? It wasn’t until the 13th century that the Franciscan theologian, Duns Scotus, broke the mental “logjam.” Scotus said there are two kinds of redemptions: (a) redemption by *liberation* that we all experience by Christ’s death for us sinners, and (b) redemption by *preservation* which is a ransom paid before the acquired right of servitude is exercised. It this latter type that applies to Mary, for out of anticipation of His Redemptive act on the Cross, those merits were already applied to Mary at the moment of her conception. This means that before Jesus’s incarnation, He was already His mother’s Redeemer. While the next ecumenical council (i.e. Trent, that was in the 16th century), didn’t object to the Immaculate Conception, its formal proclamation as a dogma of the Church didn’t occur until the 19th century. On December 8, 1854, in his text *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pope Pius IX solemnly declared:

“We declare, proclaim, and define that this dogma is revealed by God and therefore to be firmly and unremittingly believed by all the faithful: namely, the dogma that holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege from Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was kept free of every stain of original sin.”

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*“Pope Pius IX and the 1854 Bull”
above the South-East entrance of
Rosary Cathedral*

“A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” Rev 12:1

On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII declared the most recent Marian dogma in his Bull *Munificentissimus*, and that is her Assumption.

“We declare, and define as divinely revealed dogma that Mary, Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, after her life on earth, was assumed body and soul to the glory of heaven.”

Within this dogma several theological principles are at play. First, Christ overcame sin and death with His own death (cf. Rom 6:23). Death has always been understood as consequence of the Fall (Gn 3:19); thus, it was not part of our Lord’s original plan. Second, all people have the opportunity through their baptism to be connected to the power of Christ’s Resurrection, and so to overcome the consequences of the Fall. Third, however, our Lord still does not grant yet the full victory over death until the end of times. That means when a baptized person dies there is still a dissolution between their soul and body; yet (assuming they died in a state of grace), one day their body will be reunited to their soul, resulting in the “glorified body” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-54, Phil 3:20-21). Fourth, while this is our path, this is not so for Mary. By the singular privilege of her Immaculate Conception by which she conquered sin, she is not bound by the natural consequence of corruption in the tomb nor has to wait until the end of time for her glorified body. In effect, her Assumption reveals the final glorification that all the just will have at the end of time.

As we have been briefly exploring doctrinal statements about Mary, we have seen that all the statements are essentially a logical extension of her vocation as Mother to our Lord. While Scripture does not directly speak on these doctrines, they present the principles that lead towards them. The dogma of the Assumption is no different. Admittedly, there is no reference by the Church Fathers (of the first three centuries) about Mary’s final destiny. This may be for two reasons: (1) this was not a core issue of dispute with the majority of sects they were debating (e.g. Jews, Gnostics, Manichees, etc...); and (2) the Church’s doctrine on the “end times” (i.e. eschatology) had not developed to any great degree. However, in the 4th century, reflections on Mary’s final destiny began to arise. For example, St. Ephrem held that Mary’s body was not subject to corruption (suggesting the Assumption), and Sts. Ambrose and Gregory of Nyssa hint at it as well. The first Father to directly speak on the topic is St. Epiphanius who said that her body was taken into heaven without undergoing death or corruption. In the 5th century the topic was explored more widely by the Fathers, and by the end of the 8th century it was a topic that practically everyone was talking about. Beyond reflections from the Fathers, there is early evidence of liturgical feasts celebrating the Assumption...in other words, the faithful were praying what they believed. This was the case in the East by the middle of the 6th century, and by the 7th century it was observed in Rome.

With its presence clear in the history of the Church, it may be wondered why was it only declared a dogma in 1950 and not earlier? The main reason was because the Church first had to clarify the question of the Immaculate Conception (cf. art. 7). These two privileges are closely connected, and if it was held that Mary was affected by original sin, this would have implications for understanding her final destiny. But, once Pope Pius IX solemnly declared the Immaculate Conception in 1854, there was no obvious theological impediments to the Assumption. Therefore, on May 1, 1946, Pope Pius XII sent a questionnaire to all bishops asking for their stance on the topic. Of the 1,191 replies 1,169 were in favor (98.2%) and only 22 (1.8%) expressed any doubt about the opportuneness and appropriateness of a definition.

While this is a dogma about Mary, it is also about us and our final destiny. For Mary it became a reality because of her closeness to our Lord...what is the state of our relationship to Him?

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*“The Dormition of Mary”
Rosary Cathedral*

“He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” LK 1:32-33

Closely connected to Assumption of Mary (cf. art. 8) is her title of “Queen.” Mary’s Queenship is not meant to distract or detract from Jesus’ Kingship, but rather point towards it. As the King’s mother, she is associated in the work of our divine Redeemer and shares in His royal dignity (though in a limited and analogous way). Her Queenship is not to be confused with an earthly monarchy; rather, it is an ultraterrestrial royalty that reaches to the center of the human heart, touching on all things spiritual. Scripture points towards Mary’s Queenship in some unique ways, and the following are several passages of particular importance:

- (a) As seen in the quote above during the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel closely links the role of Jesus to the kingship of David. Jesus will fulfill the ultimate intention of the kingship, that is to lead the faithful to the Father. This was at the heart of the Isaiah prophecy on Immanuel that we saw in art. 2. Quite simply then, if Jesus is the true King, by implication Mary, as the King’s mother, is the Queen Mother.
- (b) “Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah” (MT 1:16). Connected to the message of Gabriel is Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. Matthew is careful to show how Jesus is related to kings of Israel that preceded Him and thus is now the true King. Included in this genealogy is this unique phrasing that introduced Mary as His mother. While the association of Mary being the Queen if her Son is the King is clear enough, what is unique about this particular phrasing is that it is used elsewhere in the Bible to introduce the “Queen Mother” (or *gebirah* in Hebrew). For example, in 2 Kings, this was the case for King Josiah and his mother Jedidah (22:1), for King Jehoahaz and his mother Hamutal (23:31), and for King Jehoiakim and his mother Zebidah (23:36). Thus, Matthew’s means of introducing Mary is also a veiled way of introducing her as the new *gebirah*.
- (c) “How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (LK 1:43). In these words of Elizabeth to Mary during the Visitation, it is clear that she recognizes her Lord in the womb of Mary, as well as Mary’s associated dignity with being His mother. Emphasizing the appropriateness of this identification, Luke said Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” as she made this claim (1:41).
- (d) “And on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage” (MT 2:11). On face value, the scene of the Magi visitation clearly shows their intention to give homage to the new King. In fact, they asked the teachers of the law “where is the newborn king of the Jews?” (2:2). Those teachers responded by quoting the passage from the prophet Micah that we reviewed before (cf. art. 2). Their offering of gifts also reflected this intention, but in an even deeper and more veiled way. The prophet Isaiah foresaw a new life for the people, led by the true King, and people would come “bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord” (IS 60:6). In other words, the Magi were not looking for any king, the thought they found the King!

As with the other teachings on Mary, the doctrine of the queenship gradually emerged from the Patristic period. There was not necessarily elaborate teachings on the title; rather, it was presented a fact in their sermons. While the 5th Glorious Mystery (i.e. the Queenship of Mary) was already being prayed for centuries by the faithful before the 20th century, the church figure who probably reflected on this title the most notoriously was Pope Pius XII. This began with a radio address on May 13, 1946, and then followed by his encyclical *Ad Caeli Reginam* on October 11, 1954 that explored the bases for this title in Scripture, Tradition, and liturgy. Ultimately on November 1, 1954 he established the liturgical feast day of the Queenship of Mary to be celebrated on August 22 (completing the octave celebration of the Assumption).

As Mary introduced her cousin Elizabeth and the Magi to their new King, may we, too, be led by her Queenship!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*“Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary”
Rosary Cathedral
Front Façade*

“Woman, behold, your son.; Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother’”
JN 19:27

While it is clear that Mary is the mother of Jesus, how can we say that she is our mother? To properly consider this question, it will be helpful to consider an image used by St. Paul for Jesus, that of Him being the “new Adam.” The Adam of Genesis was the father of mankind and also the cause of its downfall. However, with Jesus a “new life” is offered to us that leads to our fulfillment...thus He is a “new Adam.” Consider Paul’s own words:

“For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall be brought to life.” (1 COR 15:21-22)

“‘The first man, Adam, became a living being,’ the last Adam a life-giving spirit.” (1COR 15:45)

“Just as through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death...death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin after the pattern of the trespass of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come...For if by the transgression of the one person, death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ.” (ROM 5:12-17)

This image is clear enough; however, if we push the analogy further, consider the implications. Adam of course wasn’t alone, there was Eve who is the mother of all the living, and who also was actively involved in mankind’s fall. If our “new life” comes through Jesus and His life came through Mary, then Mary is our mother in the order of grace. When we begin our journey with our Lord through baptism (our birth to this new life), we gain a maternal relationship with Mary.

This maternal relationship can also be considered from another point of view, that of the “Mystical Body of Christ.” This is the idea that when we enter into the life of grace through baptism, we are so intimately joined to Jesus as if we are part of one body. (cf. EPH 4:4-13, 1 COR 12, COL 1:18). This was not a cute image for Paul, but a reality: “It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me” (GAL 2:20). St. John, too, emphasizes this union in his image of Jesus as the vine and we as the branches...we form one organism (JN 15). With this image in mind, consider its implications: Christ came so that when we are reborn through baptism and thus form a single Body with Him...therefore, by conceiving her Son, Mary at the same time conceives all those who over the course of time will form part of His mystical Body. Mary gave physical birth to Jesus, and she spiritually gives birth to us (the members of the Body).

If these arguments are too theoretical, consider finally a scene we already examined: Mary at the foot of the Cross with St. John (cf. art. 4). In the clearest words, Jesus tells John, “Behold your mother.” To be clear, this is not Jesus finalizing his last will and testament. In all of the Gospels, Jesus’ final words on the Cross are steeped in meaning and depth. In John’s gospel, it is only reasonable to expect more of this considering its symbolic nature in comparison to the other three gospels. In essence, we see here that Jesus creates a spiritual relationship between John and Himself, through Mary as their mutual mother. It is no surprise then that if John wanted to foster this relationship with his Lord, the very next line in the gospel is the following: “And from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (JN 19:27).

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*“The Crucifixion”
 Rosary Cathedral
 Side Aisle Ceiling*

“When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine’” JN 2:4

So far on our journey into Mary and soon the Rosary, we reflected on the proper understanding of who she is. However, this raises the questions: What does that have to do with me? How does this affect my spiritual life? To resolve this practical question, it will be helpful consider the nature of intercessory prayer itself. Why even pray for each other? Why pray to a saint? What is going on with intercessory prayer...how does it work?

To appreciate intercessory prayer, it's necessary to grasp the non-competitive transcendence of our Lord. This means that God exists in such a way that He does not stand competitively over and against His creation as if it is a zero sum game. So, if someone says, “If I'm paying attention to creation, then I'm not paying attention to God; or, if I give any credibility to creation then I'm denigrating God”...that person is wrong, it doesn't work that way. God is the very source of existences, in and through which all finite things exist. This is all a fancy way of saying that God does not compete with His creation, but delights in involving His creation in His own providential design. We have the privilege to cooperate with God's providential purpose. Part of this comes in with prayer. Does God deign in His wisdom and love to give some of His graces precisely through the intercession of certain figures who cooperate with his grace? The answer is yes. So if we pray for each other are we asking for that person to take the place of God? Of course not, that would be heresy. Rather, when we ask someone to pray, what we are essentially saying is: Can you cooperate with His grace so that God may give His grace through your prayer? In a similar way, but at a higher pitch, we ask the saints to intercede for us. God delights in this, He is not denigrated by that, nor is He in competition with that. Rather, He deigns in His love and providence to channel His graces through these secondary causes. Again, that is a fancy way to say it's okay to ask for a person and the saints to intercede/pray for us.

Evidence for this understanding in Scripture and Tradition is overwhelming. Consider, for example, Abraham interceding for Sodom (GN 18), Moses for Israel (EX 31), Job praying for his friends (JOB 42:10), or Daniel for Jerusalem (DAN 9:3-19). There is also the example (a 100 years before Christ) of Jews praying for the dead (2 MAC 12:39-45). Fast-forward to the New Testament, intercessory prayer continues of course with our Lord, but also His followers. The early Church prayed for Peter when he was in prison (ACTS 12:5). St. Paul often begins his letters with prayers for the community, but has also spoken to the power of intercessory prayer, for example:

“As you help us with prayer, so that thanks may be given by many on our behalf for the gift granted us through the prayers of many” (2 COR 1:11).

“From the day we heard this, we do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will” (COL 1:9).

“First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone” (1 TIM 2:1).

Clearly the early Church practiced intercessory prayer, and it was even envisioned in Heaven through the Book of Revelation (cf. REV 5:8; 6:9-11; 8:3-4). No surprise then that it has been a constant feature of Christian spirituality. But, what does this have to do with Mary? Well, if we ask fellow Christians to pray for us because we believe they will cooperate to some degree with our Lord's grace (i.e. His Divine Life) in their lives, and we pray to the saints because by definition they have embraced our Lord's grace in their lives, how much more would this be the case for one from whom our Lord was able to take on her flesh? Mary not only conceived and gave birth to Jesus, she nourished Him, presented Him to the Father in the temple, and shared in His sufferings on the Cross. Her entire life was a complete cooperation with our Lord; in an intimate way that no one can rival. With this understanding in mind, we can begin to appreciate why the Church has always turned to her for her intercession. For ourselves, why would we not want to turn to Mary? Theologically, intercessory prayer is not a replacement or denigration of God, but rather an embrace of secondary causes to His divine life. The early Church embraced these secondary causes, as well as the Biblical heroes themselves...by doing so they had an unique experience of our Lord's grace in their lives. And when considering the logic of intercessory prayer, Mary is the most reasonable person to turn towards.



*“The Smiling Madonna”
Rosary Cathedral*

Mary, our Mother, pray for us!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” LK 1:42

Moving from our theological reflection on Mary towards the Rosary itself, we will now consider the prayer at the heart of it all: the “Hail Mary.” Why do we pray this? Where did it come from? What does it mean? This last question we will address in the upcoming articles as we reflect on the different clauses of the prayer (i.e. art. 13-17), but the first two questions we will look at now. As we have already seen, Mary is the perfect model of Christian discipleship, she has a unique and privileged place in interceding for us, and she is par excellence in showing/revealing Christ. Quite simply we want to model Mary, we want her to pray for us, we want her to show us Christ! This love for our Lord and Mary’s position in the spiritual life has led early Christians to look to her in their quest to grow closer to Him...and it quickly fueled the emergence of the “Hail Mary” prayer.

The first part of the “Hail Mary” is a combination of two Scripture quotes: the “Hail” of the archangel Gabriel (LK 1:28) and the “Blessed are you” of Elizabeth during the Visitation (LK 1:42). Written evidence shows that these two lines were joined in prayer formulas in the Eastern Rite by the 6th century (e.g. ancient liturgies of St. James, St. Mark, the Ethiopic of the 12 Apostles, and the ritual of Severus of Antioch [d. 538]). It was used in a similar way in the West by the seventh century. Considering that written prayer is often the end result of verbal prayer (meaning that this prayer would have been prayed commonly and then written as a prescribed formulary), it is likely that this first part of the “Hail Mary” was already present much before the 6th century. This is truly remarkable when considering that Christianity did not become legal until 313 AD with the Edict of Milan (it was persecuted under the Roman empire before then), meaning that until that point it was extremely difficult to evangelize and spread reflections on the faith. And yet, in a relatively short period of time, the “Hail Mary” prayer organically began to emerge throughout the Church! From the 11th century on, we find ascetics and other devout persons repeat the Hail Mary in sets (10, 100, 150...) often accompanied by genuflections or prostrations. Many bishops began to encourage its recitation, and it was popularly received. The second part of the prayer, “Holy Mary...pray for us,” was added in time, mostly in the 15th century.

It may be asked, why pray the prayer at all if Jesus Himself didn’t directly give us it? Isn’t this derogating from our the “Our Father” that Jesus taught us? On this point, and this was the theological sensitivity of the early Christians, this is not an “either-or” option. Rather, the “Hail Mary” prayer points towards and builds upon the “Our Father.” It assists us to fully embrace the Lord’s prayer. Opposing the “Hail Mary” to the “Our Father,” is akin to an athlete opposing pre-game stretching to the game itself. Since day one of the Church, Christians had the fullness of revelation through Jesus, but it needed to be explained and expounded upon so that the faithful can see its implications more clearly in their lives. Isn’t this exactly St. Paul’s motivation with writing to his communities in the Scriptures? Jesus Himself made clear the need for this when He spoke of the Holy Spirit’s presence after He would ascend to Heaven: “The Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name, he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you” (JN 14:26). Early Christians did not interpret this as a kind way of saying that Jesus will be present in our thoughts, rather they interpreted it as our Lord’s Spirit pulling at their conscience so that they can grow in deeper communion with God! Consider the language of the Apostles to the early church: “It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us...” (Acts 15:28). Therefore, as we now turn towards words of the “Hail Mary,” let us take to heart the motivation of the early Church to draw into deeper communion with our Lord and pray that the Holy Spirit may open our hearts as well.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*“The Annunciation”
Rosary Cathedral
Dual Carvings*

“Shout for you, O daughter of Zion!” (ZEP 3:14)

Perhaps the third most traumatic experience in the Old Testament (the first being the Fall itself, and the second the slavery in Egypt) is the Babylonian exile. This is when Babylon (current-day Iraq) began to take over the area and render existing kings their vassal or subject. This began in Judah in 605 B.C., and they deported to Babylon some members of the royal house and aristocracy to serve as hostages; thus, guaranteeing the king of Judah (Jehoiakim) political compliance. King Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonians in 598 B.C., but it failed miserably. He died while Jerusalem was besieged, and his son, Jehoiachin, gave himself up. Along with the remaining upper and middle classes of Judah, he was a part of the second (and largest) wave of deportation to Babylon. In 587 B.C. a new king (Zedekiah) tried to rebel. Again, it failed and Babylon sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and city by fire, and thus ended the rule of the Davidic kings. Zedekiah himself was captured, his sons executed before his face, his eyes gouged out, and then deported to Babylon in chains (2 KGS 25:7). All remaining middle and upper classes were deported at this time as well. In essence for the people, life as they knew it was gone, they were trapped, and the question lingered in their minds: “Where is God?”

Before and after this traumatic experience, two prophets delivered the answer to this question. They told the people [1] to rejoice, [2] to not fear, [3] because God is with them, and [4] He will be in control. Zephaniah was first (640-610 B.C.), and the second was Zechariah (520-515 B.C.) and when Israelites began to return in 538 B.C. Notice the similarity in their message:

Zephaniah 3: [1] “Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! (v. 14) ... [4] The Lord has removed the judgment against you, he has turned away your enemies; [3] the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst (v. 15) ... [2] Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged (v. 16).

Zechariah 9: [1] “Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion (v. 9) ... [3] your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt (v. 9; cf. MT 21:5 and JN 12:15 as it’s the image of Christ on Palm Sunday!) ... [2] the warrior’s bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. [4] His dominion shall be from sea to sea (v. 10)”

For us Christians, this Messianic hope is ultimately fulfilled with Christ. Whatever figurative “Babylonian” we find ourselves in today, Jesus (by His direction and grace) helps us regain our lives. Interestingly, the essential points of Zephaniah and Zechariah’s prophecy are echoed in the archangel Gabriel’s annunciation to Mary (LK 1:26-38): [3] the lord is with you (v. 28) ... [2] do not be afraid (v. 30) ... [4] He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom there will be no end (v. 33). Where is [1] the message to rejoice you may ask ... it is contained in the very first word of the angel: “Hail.” **“Hail”** (or *chaire* in the original Greek of St. Luke) literally means “rejoice” or “be glad.” While it can be used as a warm greeting, like “hello,” (cf. MT 26:49), clearly the usage and context here harkens back to those prophets of the exile period. Thus, with his first word, Gabriel makes clear that what the Old Testament has yearned for is now happening through Mary. In turn when we begin the “Hail Mary” prayer by repeating that word “Hail,” we are not just beginning a prayer, we are echoing that deep longing for our Lord and being reminded of God’s faithful promise to us, which is ultimately fulfilled with Christ, through Mary!



*“Zacharias (Zechariah) and Sophonias (Zephaniah)”
Rosary Cathedral Nave Ceiling*

On a side note, with the archangel connecting his message to that of the prophets, he also identified Mary with the Old Testament title: “Daughter Zion.” What does this mean? First, Zion is a biblical name associated with the city of Jerusalem. It was the name of the area upon which the Jebusites built their citadel, but King David conquered it and became known as Jerusalem (2 SAM 5:6-9). In time, the name “Zion” would be applied to the entire mountain crest on which Jerusalem was built (PS 2:6) and also just to the city itself (cf. PS 147:12; IS 1:27). Sometimes it is used in an allegorical sense to symbolize the entire people of Israel (cf. the prophet Isaiah usage). In the New Testament, it will be used allegorically as Heaven itself (HEB 12:22; REV 14:1). This area is so important because it’s the site of the Temple. In ancient Israelite thinking, the Temple was a small representation of the universe (*microcosm*) where God’s perfect ordering is established (a new garden of Eden)...what would be done here would be done for all of creation (this is why the destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C. was so devastating). The name “Daughter Zion” is a poetic personification of the city of Jerusalem, used more than twenty-five times in the Old Testament, accounts for over one-quarter of the descriptions of Jerusalem in the Old Testament. It expresses the Lord’s tender affection for the city, whether in joy or in sorrow. By identifying Mary with “Daughter Zion,” Gabriel shows how the promises of the Israel would be fulfilled through her. Furthermore, as the Temple of Jerusalem was a *microcosm* of God’s right order in the world (the way things should be in the world), this *microcosm* is now found in Mary...she shows us how to perfectly order oneself with our Lord!

“Hail”...we are only one word into the prayer and more awaits us. For now, whenever we pray this prayer anew, may this first word of the archangel remind of the prophetic message to rejoice and not fear, for our Lord is with us and in control.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“And the virgin’s name was Mary” (LK 1:27)

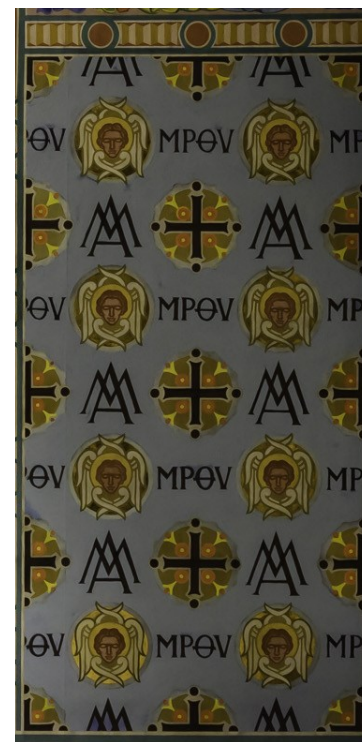
Proceeding to the second word of the rosary’s fundamental prayer is the name of our Blessed Mother: “Mary.” While our Mother’s name can be found in several places throughout Rosary Cathedral, it literally covers the walls of our upper balcony. Here you will see an image of an “A” overlapped with an “M,” which stands for the first two words of the Hail Mary prayer in Latin: *Ave Maria*. Hence, the name of “Mary” is indicated in each of these symbols. The other symbol of four letters “MPΘV” are the Greek letters of the phrase “Mother of God” (the “M” (Mu) and “P” (Rho) represents “Mother,” whereas the “Θ” (Theta) and “V” (Upsilon) represents “God”). But, is there any significance to the name of “Mary” before it was applied to mother of Jesus, and what does the name mean?

When looking at Scripture, the name of “Mary” has been used eight other times. Many of these times are seemingly inconsequential; however, one instance may be very significant. This instance is of Moses’ sister “Miriam” (the Hebrew form of “Mary”). Although not named yet (cf. EX 6:20), Miriam’s first appearance is during the birth of Moses. She observed Moses being placed in the Nile in order to save his life from Pharaoh (EX 2:4). Once Pharaoh’s daughter found Moses, Miriam interceded to have Moses properly nurtured. In other words, she played a key role in protecting the life of the infant Moses. The next time we see Miriam is at the completion of the Exodus. The Egyptians were just destroyed, Moses led the Israelites in a song of praise, and then we see Miriam (named this time) identified as a prophetess and leading the women with dance and tambourine singing, “Sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously triumphant; horse and chariot he has cast into the sea” (EX 15:20-21). To be seen as a prophet is indeed rare, but her role in leading the people with proper worship is particularly noteworthy. Indeed, the entire goal of the Exodus event was to get one’s relationship with our Lord properly orientated through worship, as Moses first told Pharaoh (EX 5:1). Miriam is not only inculcating this worship herself, she is leading others through their orientation as well. In many ways the New Testament strongly indicates that Moses is a prefigurement of Jesus (the one who leads us through the ultimate Exodus of this fallen world to the true promised land of Heaven). With this being the case, it is not difficult to see Miriam (particularly in her role with the child Moses and the Exodus) as a prefigurement of Mary. Of course, none of the Old Testament prefigurements are perfect (Moses himself sinned [NM 20] as did Miriam [NM 12]); nonetheless, they provide a lens through which we can properly understand the New Testament figures.

In terms of the meaning of the name “Mary,” many ideas (over 70 from my count) have been proposed over the years. Most of these have been based on devotion rather than philology. Two of the most popular have come from St. Jerome (4th century). The first, “Star of the Sea,” we already examined (cf. art 1), the second is the famous “My Lady” (*Madonna*) in Italian or “Our Lady” (*Notre Dame*) in French. It is a royal title since “*Mar*” means “lord” in Aramaic, and in the same language Mary is “*Maryam*.” Modern philology has also proposed three additional meanings which, too, are fitting: the first is “beautiful” (i.e. *mara* meaning “satiated” in accord with the Oriental feminine esthetic for beautiful), the second is “loved” (i.e. the meaning of the Egyptian word *mari*), and the third is “the Sublime One” (i.e. from the ancient Ugarit language where *mrym* is derived from the verb *rwm* literally meaning “high” or “lofty.”

Regardless of the precise meaning of the name “Mary,” we can proceed with confidence that this name points in the direction of new heights, where through our spiritual exodus from sin, we will discover our true beauty through the love of our Lord!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*Rosary Cathedral Balcony Wall
South side of Rose Window*

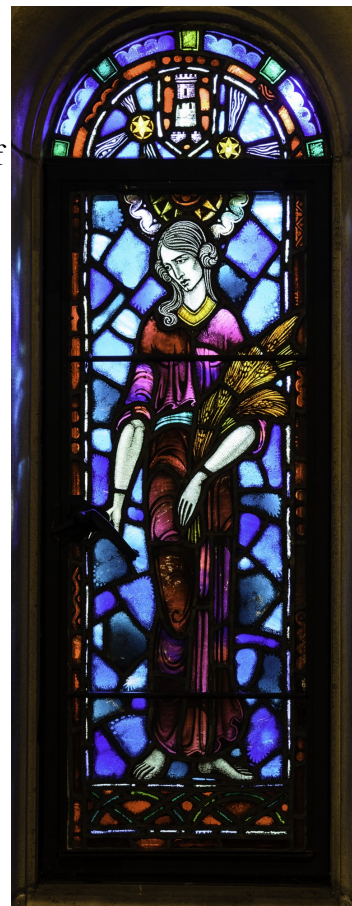
“The Lord is with you” (LK 1:28)

As we continue with the “Hail Mary” prayer, we move into two factual statements that are declared by the archangel Gabriel. The first is “full of grace.” We have already explored the sinless nature of Mary (cf. art. 7), and it will be helpful to focus on Gabriel’s words themselves. This phrase is actually one word in the original Greek: *kecharitomene*. It literally means “one who has been graced.” To be precise, it’s the perfect passive participle of the verb *charitoo*, and this indicates that this bestowed favor on Mary is not something that is about to happen to her as a result of the angel’s message. Rather, it is an action already completed in the past with effects that continue in the present. In essence, Mary has already been transformed by grace. While in the prayer we say “Hail, Mary, full of grace . . .,” Gabriel actually did not mention the name “Mary” at this time. Rather, he called her by this title *kecharitomene*, as if to say her identity is defined by this transformation.

The next factual statement, “the Lord is with you,” is a phrase used frequently in Old Testament. However, it is only used twice in the Old Testament as a greeting. The first is in the book of Judges (6:12), when an angel calls the judge Gideon. Gideon is described as weak, and God wants to work through him to defeat Israel’s enemy, the Midianites. The second time is in the book of Ruth (2:4), when Boaz greets Ruth. Ruth is also described as weak, and ultimately God works through her to help her mother-in-law (i.e. Naomi) and led her to marry Boaz (which will eventually lead to the birth of King David... Ruth and Boaz are his great-grandparents). Both of these scenes show a mission/purpose for the main character, and an outcome that is unachievable without our Lord’s help and assistance. Certainly, the angel Gabriel was introducing quite the unachievable mission/purpose to Mary.

While we are not *kecharitomene*, we do have access to this same grace, particularly through the sacraments. And while our mission/purpose is different from Mary’s, we too are reminded at every Mass “the Lord be with you.” Let us pray that we may cooperate with our Lord’s grace so that we can discover the beauty our particular calling.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



Ruth from “The Prophetic and Imitative Figures of Mary” located in the balcony of Rosary Cathedral.

“Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth” (JDT 13:18)

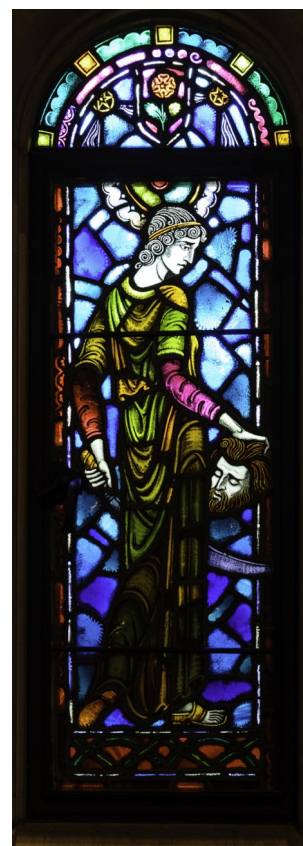
“Blessed are you among woman, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” As the “Hail Mary” prayer continues, we transition from the words of the archangel Gabriel to those of Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth. This occurred during the visitation after John the Baptist “leaped” in the womb of Elizabeth upon hearing Mary’s greeting, she “cried out in a loud voice” this phrase (LK 1:42). On face value, the meaning of the phrase is clear: Mary stands out from others because of her maternal role, and certainly the child in her womb (i.e. Jesus) is blessedness in the full sense of the word. However, as we have seen before, Biblical phraseology often contains layers of meaning. In particular, the essence of this phrase it was used twice before in the Old Testament in reference to two women. Both of these women were key in defending and protecting Israel by rooting out the proposing threat, in turn being a true vessel of God’s blessing.

The first woman is that of Jael, whom the prophetess Deborah spoke of in her canticle: “Blessed among women be Jael, blessed among tent-dwelling women” (JGS 5:24). So who is she? Her story is found in the book of Judges, who captures Israel’s initial years in the promised land (i.e. 1200 B.C. – 1020 B.C.). The book is named after twelve heroes called “judges”...they are not like judges in the modern sense, but military leaders inspired by God to aid and relieve His people in time of danger. During the time of the judge Deborah (cf. ch. 4-5), Israel was being threaten by a northern force: the Canaanites, whose general was Sisera. Deborah, a prophetess as well, foresaw that Israel will be victorious by the “power of a woman.” As the story unfolds, Deborah had to accompany their timid commander, Barak, into battle, which was ultimately successful. General Sisera flees and hides among the tents of his allies, the Kenites. Here, the figure of Jael emerges. Jael is not an Israelite, but of the nomadic Kenite people. She welcomes General Sisera into her tent, has him drink milk until he falls asleep, and then drives a tent peg through his temple with a hammer (4:21). A gruesome scene for sure; however, if we remove our modern sensitives, we in essence see God working through a woman to root out completely the threat to His people and thus allowing His blessings to flourish. As a result, Deborah sings her praises: “Blessed among women...”

The next woman is that of Judith, whose story can be found in the book of Judith. It takes place during a fragile time in Israel’s history (probably the 500s) as they returned as exiles from Babylon. As a vassal of Babylon, the foreign King wanted Israel to fight in a battle. The Israelites resisted, confident that they cannot be conquered again unless they sin against God. In an act of revenge, the foreign King sent his general Holofernes, who put Israel under siege for 34 days. Israel is completely exhausted and ready to fold; however, the figure of Judith then appears (ch. 8). She is described as a beautiful, wealthy, virtuous, and prudent widow of Israel. She encourages the deflated Israelites to be faithful, and announces that she has a plan to deliver them. Judith puts her plan into action by beautifying herself, leaving the Israelite area, and entering the enemy territory of Holofernes. She is captured and brought to the general, who is enraptured by her beauty. He is further entranced by Judith when she promises to reveal a stratagem by which to defeat Israel. Ultimately, he wants to possess her, and after a banquet they are left alone. Holofernes, however, falls asleep in a drunken stupor. Then, Judith completes her mission by hacking off Holofernes’s head with his own sword leading to Israel’s deliverance (13:8). Upon showing the head of Holofernes to the people, the leader of the Israelites proclaimed: “Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on earth.” Again, like with Jael, it is a gruesome scene. Nonetheless, what we see here is God, working through a woman, to root out completely the threat to His people and thus allowing His blessing to flourish..

Besides being a woman, how do these stories apply to Mary? As we have learned (cf. art. 2), it was already foreseen at the Fall that a woman would strike at the head of serpent, the ultimate source of evilness. Mary isn’t simply a mother, she is a warrior in the sense that she completely thwarts the plan of the evil one. And when you deal with evil, you don’t play around with it and you don’t keep some present in your life. Rather, you need to completely eradicate it if you want its antithesis (i.e. blessing) to flourish in your life. This was shown in a particular way with Jael and Judith, and it was shown in a complete sense by Mary. “Blessed are you...” is a reminder that Mary ultimately shows us how to eliminate evilness in our lives...through her intercession, may we follow her example!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



*Judith from
“The Prophetic and Imitative
Figures of Mary” located in
the balcony of Rosary Cathedral.*

“When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, ‘They have no wine’” (JN 2:3)

As we have seen in articles 12-16, the first part of the “Hail Mary” prayer is very much based in Scripture. However, the latter part of the prayer *builds* off of Scripture. This was the case with the first additional word to the Evangelical salutation: “and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, *Jesus*.” Strictly speaking, Elizabeth did not say this proper name, but rather referred to Him as the “fruit” of Mary’s womb. In Luke’s account, it is the angel Gabriel that revealed His name (1:31), and it was made public eight days after His birth (2:21). It seems to be Pope Urban IV who insisted on its inclusion around the year 1262. While his precise motivation is unknown, it is not difficult to speculate that it could have been as innocent as making explicit the identity within Elizabeth’s proclamation, and it could have been as devote as drawing greater attention to this divinely given name, which literally means “*Yahweh* saves”...which has been the entire point of the prayer up to this point!

From here, the “Hail Mary” prayer moves into its second section of supplication. This petition is based on the Council of Ephesus’ conclusion in 431 A.D., declaring Mary as the “Mother of God” (cr. art. 5). The present form was incorporated into the breviary in 1514 and codified by the Council of Trent. We have a sermon on it from 1427, preached by St. Bernardine of Siena. When we consider the Marian principles so far explored in this series, the spiritual reasonableness of this supplication is rather straightforward. **“Holy Mary,”** as we have already explored the beautiful symbolism of her name and her nature (cf. art. 14 and 15), how appropriate then that she is first of the saints when we ask for prayerful intercession. In fact, whenever a litany of saints is prayed, Mary is always listed first. **“Mother of God,”** the supplication makes clear the grounds for its petition, and we have seen how this identity is essential to all of Mary’s significance. **“Pray for us sinners,”** quite simply the prayer moves to the essence of why we are doing this: we need help as fallen people! You will never find a page in the Bible where it says: “you can save yourself, you don’t need help”...you won’t find this because it doesn’t exist and it is not the way of our Lord. Rather, from the very moments after the Fall (cf. Gn 3:15, art. 2) to the last book of the Bible (Rev 12:4, art. 4), Mary is involved in our Lord’s plan to save us from all the darkness of our fallenness. This simple petition inserts us into the drama of Scripture! **“Now and at the hour of our death,”** these concluding words lend further focus to our petition. Mary’s role and our need for assistance is never for just one moment of our lives, but for all and especially our last. As Mary was with our Lord at His last moment on the Cross (Jn 19:26), we too ask for the same motherly intervention.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



St. Cyril of Alexandria presenting the acts of the Council of Ephesus to Pope Sixtus III, while Nestorius is turning away in dissent at Mary being declared “Mother of God”.

Stone panel on the North (Islington) side of the cathedral above the entrance.

“Who are my mother and my brothers” (MK 3:33)

As we have seen before with this passage of the “*True Family of Jesus*,” the intention is not to dismiss Mary, but to emphasize the essential role of communion through inculcating the Father’s will: “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (vs. 34-35). Of course, Mary is the preeminent example of one who completely embraced the Father’s will. Christians from the beginning have turned to Mary for her inspiring example and intercession as they strive to deepen their communion with our Lord. Just as we began our journey into Mary through her accounts in Scripture (cf. arts 2-4), so did the early Christians. Naturally, this led to the emergence of the “Hail Mary” prayer...not as something separate from Scripture, but it is fundamentally of Scripture (cf. arts. 13-17). As Christians continued to turn towards Mary’s example and intercession, through prayer, in order to deepen their communion with our Lord, their prayer became more organized and focused. It is within this logical/organic spiritual development that the Rosary emerged.

While at first glance it may seem the history of the Rosary is complex and only entered the stage in the 12th century, that is only true for its form, not its essence. Its essence has been present since the Annunciation! In regards to its form, it indeed began to take shape in the 12th century. There is evidence of the faithful praying one hundred fifty Hail Marys in conjunction with the “five ‘joys’ of Mary”: Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, and Assumption. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the religious communities of the Franciscans and Servites were instrumental in helping to spread devotion to the *Sorrows* of Mary, which in turn brought greater attention to the Hail Marys and mysteries as points of meditation. In the 15th century, a Carthusian monk (Dominic of Prussia) made the devotion even more popular by linking fifty Hail Marys with fifty spiritual phrases. This collection of fifty points of meditation was referred to as a *Rosarium*, meaning “a rose garden.” How fitting is the image of a “Rose” for the sweetness and beauty that comes from these mysteries! From this Latin title, we have the official title of the devotion: *Rosary*.

Another Carthusian monk, Henry of Kalkar, divided the fifty Hail Marys into decades, with an Our Father between each. In 1483, the popularization of this devotion exploded with the publication of *Our Dear Lady’s Psalter*, a book on the Rosary written by a Dominican. In this text, the structure of the three groups of Mysteries emerged (i.e. Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious...which correspond to the fundamental aspects of Jesus’ Mysteries: Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection). These are the same 15 mysteries that are prayed today, except at the time the 4th Glorious Mystery combined Mary’s Coronation and Assumption, and the 5th mystery was the Last Judgment.

Blessed Alan de la Roche (another Dominican), founded the Confraternity of the Psalter of Jesus and Mary in 1470 (a forerunner to our Altar Rosary Societies). These efforts led to further spread of the devotion, and Blessed Alan is attributed with promoting the traditional association of St. Dominic with the Rosary. In 1569, Pope St. Pius V’s papal bull *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices* (sometimes referred to as the “Magna Carta” of the Rosary) firmly established its devotion in the Church. Finally, in 2002, Pope St. John Paul II marked the 24th anniversary of his election by publishing his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae (The Rosary of the Virgin Mary)*. Here, he suggested the addition of five new “mysteries of light,” known as the Luminous Mysteries.

For the next twenty weeks, we will examine each of the twenty mysteries of the Rosary. While all of the mysteries are associated with Mary, they ultimately point to our saving mysteries through Christ. To assist our examination, we will examine our Cathedral’s murals that display these mysteries. These murals are rich in both Scripture and Sacred Theology, and so they are a great tool in assisting our focus. As we continue our journey, let us seek our Mother’s intercession, follow her example, and so enter deeper into communion with our Lord!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath



Mural depicting angels cultivating roses from a garden, or a Rosary.

*Ceiling above “Smiling Madonna” shrine
Rosary Cathedral*

“There I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east” (EZ 43:2)



We begin our journey through the mysteries of the Rosary, with the 1st Joyful Mystery: the Annunciation (LK 1:26-38). As I mentioned last week, we will use the unique murals of Rosary Cathedral (located in the ceiling vaults of the side aisles) to guide our meditation. Each mural depicts the mystery itself (on the west half) and an Old Testament prefigurement (on the east half). In addition, there are two medallions or “tondi,” depicting biblical scenes or symbols in connection to the mystery, as well as four other relevant symbols in the corners or “escutcheons.”

The Old Testament prefigurement chosen is that of the prophet Ezekiel, being led by a “man” (commonly understood to be an angel), describing a vision of the “new” Temple to come in Jerusalem (EZ 43:1-44). Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian exile in the 6th century, the great dark period of Israel’s history (cf. art. 13 for a little description). While the beginning of his book contains warning before destruction of the Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as the eventual exile of the people, the last part consists of restoration prophecies. It is here that Ezekiel prophecies how all the tragedies of the Babylonian exile will not only be undone, but will be surpassed by the coming of a Shepherd-King and a New Temple that will never be destroyed but will last “for evermore” (EZ 37:24, 26-28). The very last chapters (i.e. 40-48) are Ezekiel’s vision of this new Temple.

To appreciate the significance of the Temple, it not only was understood at God’s presence in the midst of the people, but it also was a *new type of Eden*. The chapters describing its construction by King Solomon (1 KGS 6-8) are the zenith of the Old Testament narrative, in which themes and anticipations from Genesis are fulfilled. For example, the decorations of the Temple (e.g. gold, jewels, flowering trees, cherubim, plentiful water) call to mind Eden; it names the spring that flows from the Temple Mount after one of Eden’s rivers (i.e. the Gihon, 1KGS 1:45, GN 2:13); and just as “7” days led to the establishment of Eden, so too does “7” play significant in the construction of the Temple (7 years to build, dedicated in the 7th month, festival of 7 days, climaxed by 7 petitions). All these “7s” ties Creation to the Temple: the Temple is a microcosm (micro-cosmos), and the cosmos is a macrotemple. As a kind of re-creation, the Temple introduced a new epoch in salvation history: restoring God’s people to an Eden-like place of communion, which was the goal of the

Exodus (EXZ 15:17). Thus, when the Temple was destroyed, it was as if the entire plan of Salvation failed... but not according to Ezekiel! His vision is for a grander Temple that is completely fruitful, which he famously symbolized by the flow of water (47:1). This prophecy is ultimately fulfilled in Christ, as He is the definitive Temple...He even identifies Himself with the Temple (JN 2:21). Christ exceeds all older categories in surpassing expectations: the Body of Christ is much larger, more accessible, more “central” to the people of God; His personal sacrifice is much greater than any animal offering; and the Holy Spirit that comes from His sacraments is far superior to the water envisioned by Ezekiel. Thus, when Gabriel announces Jesus to Mary, it fulfills Ezekiel’s announcement of the Temple to the people.

The first tondi are of Gabriel at the altar of incense, telling Zacharias he will have a son whom he will name John (LK 1:5-25). This is directly before the Annunciation, and whereas Zacharias doubts, Mary believes and thus allows God’s plan to unfold through her. The second tondi is of God telling Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (EX 3:1-12), with the inscription “*Dominis Dixit Moses*” (“the Lord said to Moses”). Whereas Moses falls just short of leading the Israelites into the promised land (DT 34), Mary leads us completely to Christ.

The four escutcheons are of four plants which are multivalent symbols of the Christian faith. They are particularly associated with Mary and Jesus, and below are some of the symbolisms for each plant depicted:

Lily – It’s an Easter symbol as it is a plain bulb buried in the earth and undergoes a magnificent bloom, and thus parallels Jesus’ death and rising. It also is an association with Mary’s chastity. For example, in Leonardo da Vinci’s *Annunciation*, Gabriel is depicted handing a lily to Mary.

Rose – This is a direct connection to the Rosary (cf. art. 18). In addition, it symbolizes virginity, holiness, and innocence. Mary has been referred to as the “Mystical Rose” or “Rose without Thorns” to signify her freedom from Original Sin.

Plantain tree – This is a symbol of the pilgrim’s journey to Christ as the plant tends to grow along paths and roads. It is also a symbol of resurrection and eternal life as it constantly regenerates itself from the same root.

Pomegranate – Since this fruit “bursts forth” when ripe, it is a symbol of Christ emerging from the tomb. It is often held by the infant Jesus in Renaissance paintings (cf. Botticelli’s *Madonna of the Pomegranate*) to foreshadow his suffering and resurrection. In addition, its many seeds contained within a single rind represents the unity of believers within the one universal Church.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices” (LK 1:46-47)



The 2nd Joyful Mystery is that of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth (LK 1:39-56). You can see this depicted in the mural with names in Latin “Elizabeth” and “Mother of God” above the women, and with the “house of Zechariah” in the background (vs. 40). This scene occurred during Mary’s pregnancy, thus before the birth of new “king of the Jews” (MT 2:2). It is the first presentation of this new king, which Elizabeth recognized with great joy when she said, “How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (vs. 43). The title “my Lord,” is frequently used in the Old Testament for the Davidic king (e.g. 1 KGS 1:31, 2:38; PS 110:1). Why was Mary chosen for this: because of her great faith, as demonstrated in her famous canticle the *Magnificat* (vs. 46-55). This canticle is not only a demonstration of her complete faith, but also a summary of what this new king will accomplish.

The Old Testament prefigurement chosen is that of Ruth returning to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law Naomi (RU 1:16-19). Here, too, we see a faithful woman able to bring joy to another, and her faithfulness will ultimately result in a king: King David. We briefly examined Ruth’s story before (cf. art. 15); but, to appreciate her story fully, we need to go back to the book that precedes her: the Book of Judges. The Book of Judges relates the history of Israel from the time of Joshua (the one who led them into the promised land, likely between 1250-1200 B.C.) until the rise of the prophet Samuel (1020 B.C.). Why wasn’t the Promised Land the land they thought they were promised? The Book of Judges tells us: the people kept messing it up! The Book recounts one of the darkest periods (e.g. morally, spiritually, politically, socially) in Israel’s history. Abandonment of the worship of the Lord in favor of Canaanite paganism was rampant (which essentially was the issue with the Fall in Genesis); and every effort to worship the Lord was often carried out either in ignorance or in contempt of divine law. Although this period was chaotic, there was occasional alleviation by the activities of charismatic leaders who delivered Israel from oppression by its enemies and who sometimes also served as religious and civil authorities (i.e. the Judges...Samson being the most famous [ch. 13-16]). Nonetheless, these Judges were unable to lead Israel to greater fidelity. The book marks the point in the biblical narrative where it became apparent that the economy of the Mosaic covenant was inadequate for the flourishing of God’s people. The sacred author begins then to turn our attention forward in anticipation of a king who will inaugurate a New Covenant (2 SAM 7:1-17, PS 89:19-37) that will not replace, but rather assimilate and even transform the Mosaic covenant. This is expressed as much in the sacred author’s final pithy statement: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what he thought best” (JGS 21:25).

While the people are reckless, God is careful and intentional, and thus we have the story of Ruth. Here we see God activate His saving plan through a truly faithful individual. In stark contrast to the Book of Judges, Ruth demonstrates during this anarchic period that there was one place where true piety toward the Lord continued to be practiced: Bethlehem. The story begins outside Israel, where a certain man (Elimelech) was forced into the pagan land due to a famine. Tragically, he and his two sons die, leaving three widows. The mother-in-law, Naomi, decides to return to her hometown of Bethlehem and implores her daughters-in-law (Orpah and Ruth) to return to their gentile home of Moab. Orpah turns back, but Ruth swears an oath never to abandon Naomi: "For where you go I will go...your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (1:16). What a stunning confession of faith in the God of Israel, and from the lips of a pagan woman, whose family origin was rooted in immorality, idolatry, and opposition to God. From here, the story becomes a short romance of great charm and elegance between Ruth and a noble Israelite (Boaz). It is from this context of faithfulness that Israel will receive David (4:17), the good king so strongly desired by the Book of Judges.

The first tondi is of Miriam, prophetess and sister of Aaron (the title in Latin under her depiction). We explored her story in detail before (cf. art. 14). The second tondi is of St. John the Baptist. This is the actually his second appearance in the mural, as his mother Elizabeth was pregnant with him at the Visitation. It says he "leaped in her womb" upon Mary's greeting. That was the first moment of his life, the tondi depicts the last moment, his beheading (MT 14:1-12; MK 6:14-29). It thus presents to us one who was faithful from his first encounter with our Lord.

The four escutcheons contain the first eight words of Mary's canticle in Latin: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum et exultavit spiritus meus*. While our current English Lectionary chose to translate the phrase as provided above, a more literal translation would be: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices."

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger” (LK 2:7)



The first pages of the Bible make one point crystal clear: if creation (including you and I) desires to reach its full potential, our Lord must be in the picture. Creation is made from God, by God, and for God...its nature is intimately connected to Him. Genesis 1 emphasizes this point in two unique ways. First, is by the use of the number “seven” that symbolizes perfection. All of creation is completed in “seven” days, not six, and its on the seventh day that creation rest with God...in other words, God completes the plan of creation. To remove God from the picture would bring us back to “six,” which is incomplete...hence why the evil one is known by the number “666,” the ultimate incomplete and imperfect creature (REV. 13:18). Secondly, *the language used* to describe the formation of people suggests that we can only be understood when God is in the picture. Throughout the creation story, it says God “makes” different things. But, three times it says he “created” (“*bara*” in Hebrew), for the creation of matter (1:1), for life (1:21), and then humanity (1:27). *Bara*’ does not mean to create something like a cake; rather, its to make something new that was not there before. When we make things, we depend upon other things already in existence. To create something out of nothing, this is action of God alone. Thus, by using this term, the Bible is stressing that who we are as a person, our essence, our rights, our purpose is not and cannot be independent from God; rather, we are essentially rooted in Him. Driving this point home is the intimate detail of 2:7, where our Lord formed our bodies from the earth (the matter He *created*, 1:1) and breathed His life (which He *created*, 1:21) into us (i.e. the creation of our soul). While Genesis makes this point symbolically, St. John makes it directly when he states: “He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be” (JN 1:2-3).

In spite of this reality, our Lord was rejected from the picture by the sin of Adam and Eve. This not only created effects for them and their descendants (i.e. Original Sin), but the Bible also makes clear this has cosmic effects. Since Adam is part of creation, his rejection of God created a ripple effect throughout all of creation since it, too, is made for God. Genesis points to this reality (3:17-18) and St. Paul makes it explicit: “All creation is groaning in labor pains even until now” (ROM 8:22).

What does this have to do with the Rosary? Because in the 3rd Joyful Mystery, for the first time since Genesis, all of creation has a “taste” of what it lost, and more: the union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ! This mystery is Christmas, the birth of our Savior...the one who can save us from the imperfection of

sin. But not just us, all of creation is affected by this. St. Paul speaks of creation being set free from the “slavery to corruption” (ROM 8:21), and St. John sees our Lord proclaiming “I am making all things new” (REV 21:5). With this in mind, turn to our Cathedral’s mural of this mystery. Its four esutcheons contain cosmic symbols that point towards this truth: the sun, moon, earth, and constellation *Ursa Major*. Its symbols of creation that have been “set free,” to use St. Paul’s language. In addition to this cosmic symbolism, each image also conveys a secondary meaning: Sun – is the true “Son,” Jesus; Moon – Mary, who reflects the Son’s-light; earth – that is us: we would live in darkness if not for the sun, and of course the Son is the Light of the World in the deepest sense, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (JN 1:9); and the constellation *Ursa Major* – interpreted as the a great sheepfold, or a heavenly congregation, representing the flock of faithful followers gathered by Christ, the Good Shepherd. Hence, the cosmos not only points to Christ, it points to His mission as the one who gathers and leads us!

The mural’s tondi build on this theology. The first tondi is the making of the first man, Adam, with the Latin inscription “*Faciamus Hominem.*” (Let us make man [GN 1:26]). This is fitting for its connection to Creation, but also because it points towards Jesus, who is the “new Adam” (1 COR 15:45-47, ROM 5:12-21) that will lead a new creation. The second tondi is the three Magi, with the Latin inscription “*Magi Videntes Stellum.*” (The Wisemen see the Star [MT 2:2]). Notice, the Magi were led by a cosmic sign to Christ! In addition, the Magi show that Christ is for all mankind, as they are depicted in different races and ages.

In the depiction of Christmas itself, we simply see the Christ child, with Mary, Joseph, and presumably the archangel Gabriel. At the feet of manger are scattered roses, implicitly making the point that Christ is at the heart of the Rosary (cf. art. 18), and at the top is the cosmic star (MT 2:2, 9). Of course, the New Testament does not end here. The Christ child is a precious gift, and thanks to Mary’s maternal care, Jesus reached maturation and was able to conduct His Saving Mission. In other words, this gift of grace had to be protected and cultivated in order to see its ultimate fruit...Mary provides the perfect example of how to cultivate our Lord’s grace in our lives.

In the Old Testament prefigurement scene, the discovery of the child Moses by Pharaoh’s daughter is depicted (EX 2:6). This little child, too, will grow, and when he does, he will lead his people out of slavery towards the promised land...of course Christ does this in the perfect sense, by leading us out of slavery to sin, to the promised land of Heaven. By the way, just as Mary was key in allowing Jesus to reach maturation, don’t forget that it was Moses sister, *Miriam* (from which we get the name “Mary”), who was on watch from the bushes to make sure that Moses was delivered safely to Pharaoh’s daughter and was nursed to maturation (EX 2:4, 7-8) (cf. arts 14, 20).

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***“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed’”
(LK 2:34-35)***



The 4th Joyful mystery is the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple. This is only retold in the Gospel of Luke (2:22-38), and at face value, it captures the faithful completion Jewish purification laws by Mary and Joseph. These laws' origin are in the book of Exodus, which records God's command to Moses before the escape from Egypt: "Consecrate to me every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites" (EX 13:2). The next book of Bible, Leviticus, codified this command with additional stipulations involving a period of waiting and then concluding with a presentation and sacrifice: "She shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the meeting tent a yearling lamb for a holocaust and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering...If however, she cannot afford a lamb, she may take two turtledoves or two pigeons, the one for a holocaust and the other for a sin offering" (LV 12:6,8). In fact, it is this latter option of two turtledoves and pigeons that they offered (LK 2:24), reflecting their external poverty, as indicated in the mural by Joseph holding a bird cage in his right hand. However, from a deeper perspective, this scene also reflects their internal wealth as they are presenting the "Lamb of God." The Tondi entitled *Purificatio* (Latin for "I Purify") depicts this purification law, with a bird and lamb being shown.

More precisely, the mural is depicting the Holy Family's encounter with Simeon at the Temple. All we know of Simeon is that he "was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord" (LK 2:25-26). So, what did Simeon say upon seeing the Christ child?

Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel. (LK 2:29-32)

By this reaction, Simeon reveals Christ as the long-awaited Messiah. Furthermore, he reveals Jesus as the “light for the revelation.” Of all the aspects of the Temple then that could have been depicted, the Menorah is shown: the seven-branched lampstand that symbolizes God’s divine light as well as perfection with the seven days of creation. The Menorah’s origin is found in the first Tent sanctuary in the desert with Moses. After the covenant on Mount Sinai was made (EX 19-24), Moses establishes the Tent or Tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant at the center, which functions as a “portable Mount Sinai.” Thus, what happened to Israel in the covenant ceremony on Sanai, was represented in the liturgy of the Tent/Tabernacle. Within this space was the “Gold Lampstand of Fire” (EX 25:31-40), which represented the “Cloud of Fire” in which God was present on Sanai (EX 24:17-18). While the Menorah captured this symbolically, Christ shows it realistically as He is that true Light. Jesus will in fact identify Himself as such: “I am the light of the world” (JN 8:12; 9:5). One final observation on this scene, Simeon proceeds to tell the Holy Family that Jesus will be “destined for the *fall* and *rise* of many in Israel” (LK 2:34), indicating that some will accept and some will deny Christ. Interestingly then, depicted outside the window of the Temple is a risen city, and a waterfall (mind you, there are no natural waterfalls in Jerusalem).

The Old Testament prefigurement scene is that of Hannah giving her son Samuel to the high priest Eli, and thus dedicating him completely to the service of God (1 SM 1-2). This took place at the end of the time of the Judges (cf. art 20). As we have seen, there was a great desire for a King, and Samuel will be the key prophet in establishing the Monarchy, as he will anoint the first king Saul (1 SM 10:1) and then the second king David (1 SM 16:13). None of this would have happened though, if Hannah kept Samuel to herself and not dedicated him to our Lord. Her faithfulness and selflessness thus prefigures that of our Blessed Mother. This scene took place before the construction of the first Temple, and was within the Tent/Tabernacle that was located in Shiloh. The pot of incense to the right reflects this holy location. The pot of beautiful roses draws to mind the beauty of God’s delicate plan, which of course is captured in the Rosary.

The second Tondi is that of Anna and Mary, with the title *Patrona Matram Anna* (Latin for the “Patroness of Mothers Anna”). Thus, another example of faithful and selfless dedication to one’s child, which in turn allowed Mary to become an essential element in our Lord’s salvific plan.

Finally, the four escutcheons foreshadow Jesus’ salvific mission, which will “pierce” Mary’s heart as foretold by Simeon as well.

Olives – points to Holy Thursday evening in the Garden of Gethsemane (meaning “olive press”) on the *mount of Olives*. Olives are *crushed* to produce oil, so too will Jesus be *crushed* by the weight of sin.

Grapes – These too must be *crushed* to produce wine. The Book of Revelation (14:19-20) depicts God’s wrath as a winepress, and Jesus is the one who treads this press, executing judgment upon sin and evil.

Apples – This is used to indicate Jesus as the second Adam, while the first Adam fell to the temptation of the forbidden fruit. In turn, this reflects evil one who awaits to confront our Lord.

Wheat – It is an Eucharistic image that our Lord explains best Himself: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (JN 12:24).

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (LK 2:48)



“Why were you looking for me?” These are the very first recorded words of Jesus in Scripture, and what a question to set the tone for His entire mission! Why are we searching for Jesus? Are we seeking Him to truly be the Lord of our lives, or are we just searching for Him to be a part of our lives? If it’s the latter, the 5th Joyful Mystery is telling us that we are missing out. In this mystery, we see Jesus’s first verbal interaction with people, in particular the teachers of Temple, by asking and answering questions. They were “astounded at His understanding” (2:47). In other words, Jesus’s first recorded ministry was that of revealing the Truth. The mural depicts this by having the 12-year-old Jesus stand in front of a Temple teacher with the Scriptures. In particular, the scene captures the moment that Mary and Joseph found Him in verse 48.

With this idea of revealing and explaining the Truth, the Old Testament prefiguration scene is that of Joseph explaining his dream to his father Jacob, with one of his eleven brothers. His dream consisted of eleven stars, the sun, and moon “bowing down to me” (GN 37:9). The story of Joseph will conclude the book of Genesis (i.e. chapters 37-50), and through this story we see God is guiding everything that happens towards good, towards salvation. In spite of evil intentions and actions of human players in this story, God constantly works out His plan of salvation, including the fulfillment of His covenant promises. This scene of Joseph shows that some people are privileged to reveal the deeper purposes and ways of our Lord. Jesus Himself will not only reveal this Truth, He is the Truth (JN 14:6).

In addition to the Old Testament scene of Joseph, the artist also included the example of the prophet Daniel in a Tondi. Daniel is a prophet during the Babylonian exile (cf. art. 13 for a little description), where he was actually taken hostage and forced to live in Babylon. During this time, the Babylonian royalty experienced divine signs that were meant to show the collapse of their kingdom and emergence of the kingdom of God. The royalty could not decipher these signs, and so they brought in Daniel to reveal the deep meaning. This Tondi is depicting chapter 5, where the prince of Babylon, Belshazzar (556-539 B.C.), was having a great feast for his entire court while foolishly using sacred vessels stolen from the Jerusalem Temple. During this feast, a man’s hand appears and writes the message “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN” (DAN 5:25). Needless to

say, Belshazzar is gravely frightened and Daniel is summoned. Daniel rebukes the prince for his pride and offense against God, and explains the message: Mene (numbered...your time is running out), Tekel (weighed...meaning that he is lacking due to sinfulness), Parsin (divided...his kingdom will be split between the Medes and Persians). Again, God uses a person to reveal the deeper meaning.

The other Tondi depicts a Christian saint, with the phrase: *Et Verbum Domini Crescabat* (and the word of the Lord increased). This phrase is found in the Acts of the Apostles in three locations (6:7, 12:24, and 19:20). Like with the Old Testament examples, this Tondi conveys the point that the Church has the power and responsibility to spread the Truth, which is Jesus.

Finally, the four escutcheons depict the four classical domains for the pursuit of understanding: Science (book and torch), Art (three spheres in primary colors), Philosophy (lamp), and Music/Poetry (lyre). As these domains reveal truth, they too ultimately point towards the Truth, Christ.

May we seek Christ to be the ultimate Truth and foundation of our lives, and may we follow Mary's example and do so with much zeal!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

***“Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still not my will yours be done.”
And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to Him” (LK 22:42-43)***



The depicted scene for the 1st Sorrowful Mystery, the Agony in the Garden, is that of Luke 22:42-43 (quoted above). Here we see Jesus praying, asking for this cup to be taken from Him (also in MT 26:39), and then an angel appears to Him. The immediate question becomes: What is this cup? To appreciate the message and depth of this symbolism, it is important to recall how the Passover meal was celebrated in the time of Jesus. The Passover itself was to commemorate the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, through the means of sacrificing a lamb, and thus putting them on the path to the promised land. Jesus is clear that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (MT 26:17-19; MK 14:12-16; LK 22:7-13; JN 13:1-2), and in His time this meal was well ordered with rules and regulations by the Jewish authorities (later it will be known as the Passover Seder, Hebrew for “order”). Fundamental to this order was four cups of wine. The **first** began the Introductory Rites that ushered in the food; the **second** introduced the Proclamation of Scripture that recalled God’s salvific actions; the **third** cup began the Eating of the Meal, which probably began with the serving of an hors d’oeuvre that consisted of a small morsel of bread (called the *Mishnah*)...likely the “morsel” that is referred to when Judas dipped in the “dish” before leaving the Last Supper (JN 13:26-27). This third cup was known as the “Cup of Blessing,” because father would say a blessing over it when the meal was concluded. The **fourth** cup Concluded the Rite: it would begin with singing psalms of thanksgiving (i.e. PS 115-118) and then end with the consumption of the fourth cup.

Now, not only is it likely that Jesus would have followed this order from a historical perspective, but even the Biblical evidence points to this fact. For example, Luke mentions a cup before they eat (i.e. cup 2) (22:17) and then a cup after they ate (i.e. cup 3, the “Cup of Blessing”): “and likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you’” (22:20). St. Paul seems to confirm this detail: “The *Cup of Blessing* that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?” (1 COR 10:16). But where is the 4th cup? Was the Passover meal not completed? Matthew and Mark provide the key, for they recall Jesus saying: “I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.’ Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (MT 26:29-30; cf. MK 14:25-26). Notice, the psalms of thanksgiving began to be sung for the 4th cup, but the cup itself will not be consumed until Jesus’ death...in other words, the Passover is concluded with Jesus’ death, which is symbolized by the 4th cup. Thus, the Last Supper does not just recall the Passover, it

initiated the definitive Passover with Jesus as the Lamb of God! This brings even greater meaning to Jesus' words on the Cross: "I thirst," and "It is finished" (JN 19:28,30). So, what is being shown in this scene... Jesus is feeling the full weight of His pending death that will complete the definitive Passover, all symbolized by this 4th cup.

The Old Testament prefigurment scene is King David as he went into the Mount of Olives to repent, with Hushai the Archite (2 SM 15:30-32). Thus, we see another key figure feeling the weight of sin in the Mount of Olives; in fact, the name "Gethsemane" (which is a garden in the western slope of the mount) conveys this pressure as it is Hebrew for "oil press." In David's case, he is feeling the full weight of his own sin. The dynamic of sin is such that we can never fully anticipate its devastating consequences, and this is particularly true for David. As we saw, there was great anticipation for a King in Israel (cf. art. 20), and it seemed David was this long-awaited person. However, sin destroyed this hope. David began to commit a series of sins that "snowballed" from bad to worse. It begins with the sloth of failing to go out with his troops and instead lazing about on his couch in the afternoon (2 SM 11). Here, David falls prey to lust, employing his royal power to rape Bathsheba, the young wife of his high-ranking military officer, Uriah. Upon learning that Bathsheba is pregnant, David then adds murder to his sin of adultery, by ordering Uriah to the front lines of a battle. The text concludes with the ominous words: "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 SM 11:27). The prophet Nathan is sent to reveal the effects this will have on his "house" (2 SM 12). David chose violence and adultery, and now his "house" will be plagued by precisely those two sins: violence and sexual transgressions.

The stability of David's household begins to unravel quickly, as the sins he has committed are replicated in his family and wreak havoc among those most dear to him. His son Amnon follows his example, and uses his influence to rape his beautiful half-sister Tamar (2 SM 13:1-22). This is an offense punishable by death in the Mosaic Law; however, David fails to discipline his son. Tamar's full brother, Absalom, is understandably indignant and assassinates his offending half-brother (2 SM 13:23-36). Absalom flees into exile out of fear for retribution; however, he also begins to employ sympathetic contacts within David's court to achieve reconciliation with his father (2 SM 14:1-33). In the midst of this turmoil, Absalom slowly builds political support to the point that he is able to expel David from Jerusalem and take his place in the city (2 SM 15-16). In this way, David's sins of deceit and betrayal of Uriah also spring back upon himself, and he learns what it is like to be betrayed. Nonetheless, many of the royal officials remain loyal to David, and Absalom's coup is eventually defeated, with Absalom himself coming to a humiliating end by getting his head caught in the branches of a tree, and consequently executed (2 SM 18). In the midst of the sinful chaos, we have David facing this reality on the Mount of Olives, just as Jesus will do nearly a 1000 years later; but, as the definitive King who will overcome it.

The first Tondi is inscribed with *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Convertere* (Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Return), echoing a constant theme of the Old Testament Prophets for Israel to turn from sin. More particularly, the Latin phrase is a liturgical refrain added to the end of the lessons in the Lamentations of Jeremiah during the Tenebrae services in Holy Week. Jeremiah's entire ministry was during the dark Babylonian Exile period (cf. art. 13 for a description), and the book of his Lamentations was composed after the Temple was destroyed in 587 B.C. The second Tondi is St. Peter in chains, *Petrus in Carcere*, which occurred in Acts 12:1-11. Thus, the first Tondi is continuing the theme of repentance of sin as shown by David, and the second Tondi continues the theme of the weight of sin on the just as demonstrated by Christ.

As shown above, an angel was sent to help strengthen Christ in garden. A reminder that in the midst of the great darkens, our Lord is still present and working to undo its effects. Thus, in the midst of this very dark mystery, there is a light of hope with the four esutcheons depicting angels of God.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged.” (JN 19:1)



The depiction of the scourging of our Lord is simple and yet powerful. This detail of the Lord’s Passion is attested to John’s Gospel, as well as Matthew (27:26) and Mark (15:15). On the left of Jesus is the Roman soldier conducting the scourging. To the right of Jesus is an angel. While none of the Gospels mentions this detail, it is very conceivable. First of all, as we saw last week, an angel was present with our Lord during his agony in the garden, with no indication of it departing (cf. art. 24). Secondly, angels ministered to Christ before during trying times (cf. MT 4:11 and MK 1:13; cf. HEB 1:14). Thirdly, as agents of the Father’s will, the Father’s love never ceased for the Son. For these reasons, we will see the depiction of an angel, not only in this mystery, but in the third and fourth as well. Finally, at the feet of our Lord is the purple garment that awaits Him (JN 19:2, MK 15:17, MT 27:28 [Matthew actually says “scarlet,” but is referring to the same garment, just a different impression of the color]).

The Old Testament prefiguration scene is that of Job’s testing by Satan. In particular, it is at the end of the testing when Job makes his final lament (chs. 29-30), and makes this statement expressing his lowly treatment by others: “But now they make sport of me, men who are younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock” (30:1). Job is lamenting that men he considered not to be worthy of the flock of his dogs are now looking down on him. Ironically then in this scene, the only other earthly creature that is with Job is his dog. In general, the book of Job is the most direct treatment of the problem of evil (i.e. if God is all good and powerful, why is their evil in the world?). It recounts the life and sufferings of a righteous Gentile of ancient times as he undergoes prosperity, disaster, depression, and finally restoration during a period of painful testing. As Job finally pleads for divine justice, God responds by essentially making the point that Job, or any human, does not have the necessary knowledge to judge adequately the justice of His providence (chs. 38-42). Because our knowledge is limited, the only appropriate posture in the midst of suffering and perceived evil is humble trust, which is modeled for the most part by Job. However, this humble trust is most perfectly molded by our Lord, and hence why Job was chosen as a prefiguration for Christ’s suffering.

While the positive of humble trust is most appropriate, that is not to say that there is sin and injustice in this fallen world. The Tondi make this point clear by illustrating the pain caused by sin. The first is that of Cain murdering Able, and in effect depicting the first murder of the Bible. All the sinful motivations of Able are on full display with our Lord's Passion. The second is that of Paul being scourged (the Latin title meaning "Paul the scourged"). By standing up for Christ, Paul experienced much affliction, including beatings (e.g. ACTS 16:22-23 and 2 COR 11:25). The only time the Bible records his scourging was when he was in Jerusalem (ACTS 22:24-29).

The four escutcheons depict instruments of our Lord's Passion: jail (LK 22:63), ball and chains (JN 18:12), whips, and a scourge.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Hail, King of the Jews!” (MT 27:29)



In article 20, we had the opportunity to reflect on the spiritual status of Israel between the time of the entrance into the Promised Land (1250-1200 B.C.) until the rise of the prophet Samuel (1020 B.C.), and it was not good. It was one of the darkest periods (e.g. morally, spiritually, politically, socially) in Israel’s history. Abandonment of the worship of the Lord in favor of Canaanite paganism was rampant; and every effort to worship the Lord were often carried out either in ignorance or in contempt of divine law. Complicating matters, Israel began to desire an earthly king to (A) “be like the nations” (i.e. pagan nations) (1 SM 8:20), which is a striking rejection of their call from God as “first born son” (EX 4:22); and (B) to “fight their battles” (i.e. military power from an earthy king, since God’s protection is not enough for them) (1 SM 8:20). As we have seen since the first pages of Genesis, our Lord in His mercy meets the people where they are at and works through their disordered desire in order to achieve reconciliation. This time it will be through the *Davidic covenant* (the 4th and last covenant of Old Testament). The King through this covenant will be both “son of David” and “son of God” (2 SM 7:14) as he will be anointed with the spirit of God (that is literally what *Messiah* means), and Israel will enjoy indirectly the benefits of this filial relationship between their king and God. This is significant because while in the desert, the privileges of Israel’s sonship were suspended due to their sinfulness (GAL 3:23-25). While this looked very promising with King David, he himself ultimately failed through sin (art. 24). On his deathbed, David calls for his son Solomon to be the next king. He had the high priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan mount Solomon on his mule, and then had him anointed at Gihon. This is depicted in the Old Testament prefigurment scene (Nathan to the left, the royal mule in the center, Solomon being anointed, and Zadok to the right with a horn of oil). Significantly this episode is bringing together the law (the high priest) and the prophets, at Gihon (which is one of the four rivers that flowed out of the Garden of Eden [GN 2:13]) ... suggesting a new beginning of “sonship” through Solomon. Indeed, there was great promise with Solomon as his early success seemed to be a new “Adam” (Covenant 1), was bringing to fulness the promises of the Abraham (Covenant 3), and was transforming the Covenant with Moses (#4) into something more (particularly demonstrated through the construction of the first Temple).

Nonetheless, Solomon succumbed to his own sinfulness (start reading 1 KGS 11, and you will easily see the problem). Upon his death, Israel entered into schism in 922 B.C.: the north known as “Israel” and the south known as “Judah.” The North would ultimately have their last earthly king in 724 B.C. as they were invaded by Assyria, and the South had their last in 587 B.C. with the Babylonian Exile. It seemed as if the Davidic covenant was over as it was obliterated by sin! During this time of the Old Testament, the prophets really begin to emerge to warn the people and the kings. Capturing this sensitivity, one of the Tondi depicts the prophet Elisha being rejected in 2 KGS 2:23-25, with the Latin inscription *Illudebant Elizeo* (“They mocked Elisha”). Elisha’s experience was not peculiar, as the prophetic message was commonly rejected. Through all of this, the people still sensed the emptiness and darkness of being out of this communion / filial relationship with our Lord. They began to yearn for a new *Messiah* to rescue them from this emptiness and darkness. A common word enounced to express this desire was “Hosanna.” Originally this was a word of urgent supplication, meaning something like: “Come to our aid!” By the time of Jesus, it acquired Messianic overtones. This is beautifully captured in the second Tondi of Palm Sunday. Notice the Latin inscription of MT 21:9 (“Hosanna to the Son of David”) captures this desire for the new king of the Davidic covenant. Luke connects this scene to Solomon’s anointing when it says “They set Jesus upon it [colt],” as that is the same expression used upon Solomon’s mounting on David’s mule. But, Jesus is not simply a king like Solomon, as He Himself said: “There is something greater than Solomon here” (MT 12:42).

While Jesus is of line of David (MT 1:1; LK 3:31), He also is the Son of God...and His sonship is not adoptive, but is natural. And this King will create a lasting Covenant between the Father and the people through His own sacrifice. In the depiction then of the “Crowing with Thorns,” the contrast of God’s kingdom verse the earthly kingdom is highlighted. A roman soldier is standing with the letters SPQR underneath him (*Senatus Populusque Romanus* [The Senate and People of Rome]). The soldier appears to be in power over the bound Jesus; however, we know this only appears to be the case. Indeed, the angel is indicating power that Christ the King is about to unleash by incensing Him...a gesture first introduced in the tent/tabernacle of Moses (EX 30) and continued in the Temple of Solomon, to indicate the offer of a sacrifice.

The esutcheons all reflect kingship: a *Globus Cruciger* (a cross-bearing orb) that represents Christ’s dominion over the world; a sword and sheath; a scepter and scroll; and a crown.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you” (MT 9:22)



In the scene of the 4th Sorrowful Mystery, we have the Old Testament Tondi of the prophet Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (that is the translation of the Latin title) (1 Kgs 17:7-24). Their story is one of ultimately trusting in God when the situation seems impossible. To appreciate this message, let’s look closer at the context: It takes place during the reign of king Ahab, and this is the year 870 B.C., 50 years after Solomon. Ahab is described at the end of chapter 16 of 1 Kings as the worst king yet since Solomon, mainly because he erected worship sites of foreign gods and promoted their worship. One of his “accomplishments” was rebuilding Jericho, which was precisely the place the Israelites had to overcome before entering the Promised Land. It is under this king that Elijah first appears in the Bible.

Elijah is a good man, his name in Hebrew means “Yahweh is my God.” He is told to go to Ahab, challenge his idolatry and announce a drought. This drought is not arbitrary, its symbolic: Connection to God leads to life, whereas disconnection leads to lifelessness, or a “drought.” What is very insightful about this scene is that Ahab’s sin, his severing from God doesn’t only create a drought in his life, but also in the whole kingdom, his sin affects everyone including the good Elijah...and that is precisely how sin works in our lives, it will eventually affect those around us. Elijah feels this drought and feels trapped by it. God is still there watching over Elijah, and tells him to go to the Wadi Cherith (just means a little river or creek) for water and He will send ravens to feed him. Now, this is as ridiculous as it sounds and you just imagine Elijah’s reaction: “I have to go to this little creek and these ugly ravens are going to bring me bread and meat; why don’t you just rain down water, have the king bring me food, I did nothing wrong.” But he trusts in the Lord and sure enough he receives water and food how God prescribed. Nonetheless, the little Wadi Cherith dries up...just imagine Elijah’s reaction seeing that little creek become less and less. He is told to go to Zarephath and visit a widow who will provide for him. Again, just imagine his reaction: (1) in a middle of drought you want me to travel, and (2) to a foreign land (even now if you ever travel outside the

country it can be a little bit scary, uncertain, perhaps dangerous), and (3) on top of this a widow will provide for me (keep in mind the social order/status at this time). If dealing with those ugly ravens wasn't enough, now this...yet Elijah trusted and went. He found the widow, and then asked her for a bit of bread. This was her response: "As the Lord, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks to go in and prepare something for myself and my son, when we have eaten it, we shall die" (vs. 17). Elijah responds by increasing the ask, and requesting a little cake instead. Now, you can imagine the widow's reaction: "Did you not hear I have nothing and I'm trying to die?" But, like Elijah, she trusts! As a result, it says her jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry. This story shows us two people who felt trapped in life, but when they remain faithful, they saw how God's grace worked through the seemingly impossible.

The New Testament Tondi is that of Veronica who wiped the face of our Lord (translation of *Vultus Domini*). This is the sixth station of the Cross; however, the scene itself is not recorded in Scripture. Nonetheless, tradition identifies the woman who suffered 12 years of hemorrhages as Veronica (MT 9:20-22; MK 5:25-34; LK 8:43-48). Here we have another person who feels trapped; yet, she placed her hope in Jesus, saying to herself "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured" (MT 9:21). She touches Jesus, and He says: "Courage, daughter! Your faith has saved you" (MT 9:22). What is inspiring about the sixth station is that her faith compels her to be by the side of her Savior, even when again it looks as if they are in an impossible situation.

The Old Testament prefigurment scene is that of Abraham being tested to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac carries the "wood", and Jesus carries the "wood of the cross." Again, a scene where Abraham and Isaac felt trapped; yet, we know God had another plan. This is depicted as well in the scene with the ram caught in the thicket, which God's uses as the sacrifice in the place of Isaac (GN 22:13). Likewise, the scene of Jesus carrying His cross, He encounters Mary and John (as seen by their halos, and will be apparent when compared to mystery five). Like Jesus, they continue to trust, knowing that God can and will work through the seemingly impossible. This truth is also depicted in the scene with the angel following our Lord.

The esutcheons are of objects used in the betrayal and passion of Jesus: a Lantern to find Him, a Rope to bound Him, a Judas bag of the Thirty Pieces of Silver, and the Crown of Thorns. Let us pray, that like Mary, we will trust when we face the seeming impossible!

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit” (LK 23:46)



We have now arrived to the 5th Sorrowful Mystery, the death of Jesus on the Cross. St. Thomas Aquinas said there are three essential symbols in the Cross: it shows God’s means to heal and save us; it shows God’s great love for us; and it models the path for discipleship. All three of these symbols are uniquely displayed in our mural! Beginning with the power to heal and save, look at our Old Testament imagery. Our prefiguration scene is that of Moses raising his hands in prayer, with Aaron and Hur helping to hold up his arms (EX 17:12). This occurred in the early days of Israel’s exodus, when they faced a physical barrier to their progress: the Amaleks (they will prove to be the archenemy of Israel, and are of the lineage of Esau who was the twin brother of Jacob, son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, he impulsively sold his birthright to Jacob for a meal [GN 36:12]). With this barrier, Joshua was sent into battle and as Moses had his hands raised, they were successful. Now, if you move past the literal questions, notice the beautiful symbolic spiritual imagery: God wants great things for us, in this fallen world things (even people) will stand in the way, but through the power of God’s grace these can be overcome. The Church Father saw this, and understood this scene as a prefiguration of Jesus who won victory over the devil and death with his outstretched arms.

The Old Testament Tondi is the *Nehushtan*, which is a bronze serpent that Moses mounted on a pole (NM 21:9). Leading up to this point, the Israelites were aggressive in their faithlessness: they complained, they rebelled, they turned to idols, and even denounced the Heavenly Manna—“We are disgusted with this wretched food!” (NM 21:5). As a consequence of this faithlessness, they were bitten by serpent. As a remedy, God commands Moses to mount a serpent on a pole and have the people look at it. Now, you may think: “What on earth, you want them to stare at the thing causing them harm, and then they will live?” However, notice the wisdom: You have been running from where you should be, there is a fear in you that is fueling this faithlessness, these snakes are a direct result of this fear...if you want to reach the Promised Land, face your fear. Fear always implies some unknown, that is why we are scared of it. To overcome fear, face it, shine some light on it, begin to figure it out and you will gain confidence. Jesus will say 1200 years later, “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (JN 3:14-15) (the first part of this verse is depicted in Latin in the Tondi). You may think, “What on earth, why?” Well, the Cross is the epitome of fear, the aggregation of everything people are afraid of: the life you knew is gone, plus it will be caused by death, plus it’s the worst kind of death (slow agonizing, suffocation and exsanguination), plus you know it’s coming, plus your best friends abandoned you,

plus your people turned against you, plus they are led by a tyrant who doubts truth, plus you are completely innocent, plus everyone knows it, plus they choose a criminal to be realized instead of you, plus you have to watch the pain in your closest loves ones (like your mother) as you go through this...on the Cross, we see all the worst forms of fear presented and all the other fears that are present in this world will find its reflection in it as well. The Cross reflects all the fear of this world, and yet it also shows that in the midst of all that fear, God the Father is still present, is in control, and has a way to overcome it with His grace. Jesus says I must be lifted up, why, so that what is causing fear in our lives right now, that is paralyzing and frustrating our journey to our promised land, we can face it begin to work through it, and see that the Father is with us in this midst.

In the New Testament Tondi, we have the symbol of discipleship with the Apostle Andrew. The Latin phrase is a motet honoring him, "Andrew, servant of Christ." While his death is not recorded in Scripture, Tradition holds that he was crucified on an X-shaped cross around 60-62 A.D. He was bound, not nailed, because he deemed himself unworthy to die on the same type and style of cross as Jesus. His cross is depicted as well.

In the Mystery scene itself, we have the symbol of our Lord's love. First, Christ gives up His life for us. Secondly, this particular scene is of John's Gospel, where Jesus entrusts His mother Mary to John: "Behold your mother" (JN 19:27) (cf. Art. 10).

The escutcheons are of objects used in Jesus's crucifixion: hammer and pincers, nails, lance, and a chalice (could point back to the Last Supper itself where Jesus turned His death into a sacrament; or, it could reflect a medieval tradition that said Joseph of Arimathea used the Holy Grail to collect Jesus' blood).

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Do not be afraid!” (MT 28:5)



We now enter into the Glorious Mysteries, the first being the Resurrection of our Lord. If the Sorrowful Mysteries instilled any sense of fear, this first Glorious Mystery is the antidote: “Do not be afraid.” In fact, these were the words spoken by the angel at the empty tomb. On the day of the Resurrection, it was assumed that it’s all over. In fact, the three women who went to the tomb (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome [MK 16:1]) brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus (you can see the left two women holding the jars of spices). They could not see any other possibility...they couldn’t, but God did! Indeed, this angel had the privilege of sharing the impossible joyful news of Jesus’ Resurrection.

This theme of not fearing, but trusting, is beautifully captured in the Old Testament prefiguration scene of Jonah. Jonah’s story is set in about the 750s B.C., and it begins by God calling Jonah to preach a message of repentance to Nineveh. Nineveh is the capital city of the Assyrians, which is the most hated enemy of Israel at this time. So, Jonah is being asked to go to the “belly of the beast.” Understandably Jonah is flabbergasted by this request and decides to go opposite direction, east to Tarshish. What happens next is a beautiful spiritual lesson in what happens when we refuse God’s call...in a word, trouble! The ship Jonah relied upon collapses (a way of saying that going against God’s will never works out; and it’s not God punishing us, but simply the natural consequences of our choice, like driving off the road into a muddy field, you expect to get stuck). We see next the people he was with turn on him and throw him overboard (notice, when we refuse God’s will, it affects others; why, because we are interconnected and our mission is never just for our own good, it affects the whole church), and finally Jonah is swallowed by a large fish for three days. Up to this point, fear paralyzed Jonah from doing the right thing, and it created havoc. Faith is needed, in during the three days in the belly of the whale, he is converted. During this time, he prays (JON 2:3-10). In fact, his prayer implies that he died and descended into the realm of the dead: “I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me for ever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit...When my soul fainted within me” (2:7-8). While it seems that all is over for Jonah, God sees things differently. Our Lord has fish spew Jonah on the coast of Nineveh (He not only brought Jonah back to life, He brought him to where he needed to be). This particular scene is depicted in the prefiguration...Scripture says the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time (JON 3:1), and our mural has this action personified, with the title *NUNTIUS DOMINI* (the message of the Lord). This experience of a new life from the unexpected was used by Jesus Himself as a prefiguration of His own death, burial and Resurrection: “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, so too will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights” (MT 12:40).

The Tondi too point to tremendous hope in the face of the impossible. Beginning with the Pius Pelican (*Pie Pellicane*), this is a classic representation of Jesus the Lord (*Jesu Domine*). In particular, it points to Jesus's sacrificial love in the face of the impossible. The idea is that in the time of famine, a mother pelican's love is so great for her chicks that she will pluck flesh from her own body to feed them. Thus, sacrificing herself and yet feeding them...so too our Lord sacrificed Himself (Cross) for us and feeds us with His body (Eucharist). The next Tondi is of the Phoenix, which is a mythological bird that early Christians adapted to symbolize Christ rising from dead as it rises from its own ashes. The Latin phrase *Resurrexit Sicut Dixit* (He is risen as He said) is a traditional foundational Christian proclamation.

The escutcheons are a Rose, its red symbolizes the blood of Christ shed on the cross, and yet its beauty symbolizes new life. The Candle points to the Easter candle, which symbolizes Jesus as "the light of the world" (JN 8:12). The Star of David shows that Jesus fulfills the hopes of all Israel, as He himself is the "son of David" (MT 21:9). Finally, the Banner with Red Cross represents victory over death and sin. This popular renaissance symbol indicates the bloodshed with the red, while the white represents purity and victory.

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (JN 14:6)



With the combination of the first and second Glorious Mysteries (Resurrection and Ascension), we have the great reversal of two fundamental consequences of the Fall: death and banishment. The Fall was the breaking of the first biblical covenant, and that means the forfeiture of their roles as stewards of the God’s garden, or better yet our Lord’s sanctuary. While this may appear at first glance to be a punishment, these consequences are also an act of mercy and a remedy! Regarding the former, God does not wish Adam and Eve to become immortal in a state of covenant separation from Him, thus rendering them permanently alienated: “He must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruity from the tree life” (GN 3:22). Regarding the latter, death will serve as a means to change our hearts because the process of dying leads to humility (PS 90:3-10) and repentance (PS 90:11-13) and ultimately reconciliation (PS 90:14-17). It is a natural antidote to the pridefulness and self-sufficiency of sin. As will be the case in the later sanctuary of Israel, the *cherubim* (the first angelic beings mentioned in the Bible) permanently guard the way to the tree of life (GN 3:24). The rest of the Bible will, in a sense, be a long story of mankind’s journey back to a state in which it can once again eat from the fruit of the “tree of life” and “live for ever.” Ultimately, it is Jesus who is both the source of eternal life (“whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” [JN 6:51]) and the way to eternal sanctuary (“I am the way...No one comes to the Father except through me” [JN 14:6]).

The biblical description of the Ascension can be found primarily in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. St. Luke said “a cloud took Him from their sight” (1:9)...and you can see this cloud depicted at the top of the mural. A “cloud” is often used in Scripture represent God’s presence (cf. EX 13:21; 16:10). Then two angelic figures “dressed in white garments” appeared to the disciples...our mural shows one of these figures (notice in front of his feet, are our Lord’s foot prints). One of these figures said: “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven” (1:11)...that is, on a “cloud,” which fulfills the prophet Daniel’s vision: “One like the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven” (DAN 7:13). While this ultimately alludes to Jesus’ 2nd coming, that is not to imply a lack of our Lord’s presence now. The next Glorious Mystery will make this point clear.

The Old Testament tondo depicts the first man mentioned in Scripture to be taken into heaven: Enoch. To appreciate his story, it is important realize the era of corruption that he lived. After the first murder in the Bible, we hear of the descendants of Cain. Their degeneration is suggested by the fact that they name cities after themselves and not God (4:17), and by the sixth generation with Lamech we have a violent braggart and inventor of bigamy who intimidates his wives by boasting of his murders (GN 4:23-24). Hope is introduced in the picture with the birth of Adam and Eve's son Seth, "at that time men began to invoke the Lord by name" (i.e. worship) (4:26). In contrast to the line of Cain, the line of Seth is marked by extremely long life-spans, and righteous figures such as Enoch, who "walked with God," in contrast to Adam and Eve who hid from God (5:24). Enoch's ascension into heaven is attributed to his strong faith (HEB 11:5). The only other time this happened in the Old Testament period was with the prophet Elijah, depicted in the Old Testament prefigurement scene. We have briefly considered his story before (cf. art. 27), and like Enoch, he was a man of strong faith during very difficult times. His ascension took place in front of his protégé, Elisha: "As they walked on conversing, a flaming chariot and flaming horses came between them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind" (2 KGS 2:11). The New Testament tondo, entitled *Paulus Raptus in Paradisum* (Paul was caught up into paradise), could refer to Paul's own entry into heaven, but most likely it is in reference to his personal experience of being "caught up" to the "third heaven" or "paradise," which is in reference to the highest place in heaven where the divine glory dwells (2 COR 12:2-4). This was a mystical vision, understood as the highest form of cognitive and contemplative experience. Paul used the Greek verb *harpazo*, which means "to seize" or "to take away by force." It implies a sudden, powerful, and supernatural removal, and it's the same verb he used to describe how believers will be "caught up" in the clouds to meet the Lord at His coming in glory (1 THES 4:17). This Greek verb was translated into the Latin *rapiemur*, from which we get the English word "rapture."

The first escutcheons are a Paschal candle being extinguished, which was traditionally done after the reading of the Gospel in the Ascension Day Mass, to symbolize the ascension of the Light of the World into Heaven. The second is a New Moon, as a new moon was used to mark the start of months or new beginnings, so too is a new era established by Christ's ascension. The third is a Trumpet, which when played signified a new beginning. Fourth and final is an Oak Tree, that could be in reference to steadfastness of Jesus' kingdom following His ascension, and/or the growth of Jesus' Church post ascension that Isaiah prophesized will be like "oaks of righteousness" (IS 61:3).

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus” (ACTS 1:14)



This is the final explicit mention of Mary in the Bible (*n.b.* Paul will allude to her in GAL 4:4, as will John in REV 12). Here in Acts, St. Luke lists the eleven Apostles who were along with Mary and other women in the Upper Room. He describes the feast of Pentecost: “There appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (ACTS 2:3-4). This scene is depicted in the mural, as Mary is surrounded by eleven people, presumably the Apostles. Underneath their feet is the Latin phrase: *emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur et renovabis faciem terrae* (Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth). This phrase is derived from PS 104:30, and is used at the Mass for Pentecost. Name the “Pentecost” comes from the Old Testament feast on which this event occurred. Exodus 23:16 first described it and Leviticus named it (23:15:22): it’s a feast that occurs 50 days after Passover, marked by the grain harvest which is a sign of God’s provision for Israel. As another sign of Divine provision, it also marked the giving of the Torah (Law) on Mt Sinai (almost 50 days after the original Passover) by God, who did so through the appearance of smoke, fire, and thunder (EX 19:18-19). In the Upper Room we have the definitive “Pentecost,” where we too see a similar appearance: fire and “from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind” (ACTS 2:2). Here, the ultimate provision is given: our Lord Himself! This union with our Lord will in turn lead to union amongst themselves, expressed through their new found ability to speak in different languages (vs. 4). This is clearly in contrast to those who sought disunion from God at the Tower of Bable, and found their language confused as a result (GEN 11:7-9). How appropriate it is then that Mary who displayed perfect union with our Lord throughout her life, who is highly venerated (*hyperdulia*) throughout the entire world, is front and center for this definitive Pentecost!

As this 3rd Glorious Mystery commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, each of the other images of this mural also point to God’s transcendence...that is, His nature beyond the physical limitations of this world. Beginning with the Old Testament prefigurement scene, we see God as a “Pillar of Fire” leading Israel out of slavery into Egypt (EX 13:21-14:31). It says God was a column of cloud during the day and column of fire at night...both images conveying His spiritual nature. In addition to conveying His nature, it also points to our Lord’s mission with us: to lead us to the Promised Land!

In the first Tondo, we see Jesus being baptized by John, with “the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him” (MK 1:10). The inscribed Latin phrase *Qui Baptizatus in Spiritu* (“who is baptized in the Spirit”) is taken from Mark 16:16, the last part of the phrase being “will be saved.” Indeed, just as the Spirit brought the ultimate provision at Pentecost and it led Israel to the Promised Land, so too will it bring us salvation. The second Tondo is the transfiguration of Jesus, which is reflected in the inscribed Latin phrase *Nubes Lucida Obumbravit Eos* (“A bright cloud overshadowed them”) (MT 17:5). Notice the return of the bright or fiery cloud and its connection to a transfiguration: a normal life to something more!

Concluding with the escutcheons, the first is of an Eye with Three Flames. The flames reflect the Triune Nature of God (Father – Son – Spirit), and the Eye points to our Lord’s all seeing or Omniscience state. Next, we have Seven Lamps of fire, which is reflected of heavenly scene of God’s court: “Seven flaming torches burned in front of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God” (REV 4:4). Interestingly, this was anticipated by the Temple of Solomon which 10 giant golden menorah (7 branch candles) in its nave, which was inspired by the two small golden menorah in the nave of the Tabernacle/Tent of Moses. The seven branches reflects the seven days of creation, which itself began with a “mighty wind sweeping over the waters” (GN 1:2) (i.e. the Holy Spirit). The third escutcheon is scroll, inscribed at the bottom from the prophet Isaiah 11:2-3. This passage lists the seven gifts that will be on the future Immanuel (i.e. Jesus) who will bring salvation: *Sapientia* (wisdom), *Intellectus* (understanding), *Consilium* (counsel), *Fortitudo* (fortitude), *Scientia* (knowledge), *Pietas* (piety), and *Timor* (“fear” of the Lord). The fourth escutcheon is a scroll inscribed at the bottom from Revelation 5:12. It’s a heavenly vision of Christ, the slain Lamb, and it names seven honors or qualities of Christ that belong to God: *Virtus* (virtue), *Divinitas* (divinity), *Sapientia* (wisdom), *Fortitudo* (strength), *Honor* (honor), *Gloria* (glory), *Benedictio* (blessing).

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“My Lord, our King, you alone are God.” (EST C:14)



The Old Testament prefigurement chosen for the 4th Glorious Mystery, the Assumption of Mary, is the story of Esther. Esther records how an attempt to exterminate the Jewish people from the Persian Empire (519-465 B.C.) was foiled and reversed through the efforts of two Jews, Mordecai and his niece Esther, who rose to positions of prominence within the Persian court and used their influence to better the fortunes of their people. On the one hand it's a story of God's providence in the most unlikely situation, and on the other hand is example of faithfulness in the midst of this uncertainty. The story begins with the Persian king, Ahasuerus, becoming angry with the non-compliance of his queen, and so has her deposed. The king inaugurates a "beauty contest" to select a new queen. Esther, who is a Jew, wins the contest and is named queen. Esther's uncle, Mordecai, serves as a court official to the king. At this time, a certain Haman, an Amalekite descended from the wicked king Agag (1 SM 15:8-33) is promoted in the king's service above all the other courtiers. Mordecai refused to bow to this Haman when he enters and leaves the royal palace. Infuriated by this, Haman decides to wipe out Mordecai's entire race, the Jews. Haman bribes the king for an edict of extermination against all descendants of Judah, and it is proclaimed. In great distress over the edict, Mordecai asks Esther to intervene with the king. Esther explains that despite her status as queen, she is not free to initiate contact with the king and can do so only at the risk of her life. Mordecai insists and lays bare the understanding of divine providence that is at the very heart of the book: "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (EST 4:14). Esther agrees, but requests that all the Jews fast for three days, after which time she beautified herself and made bold to enter the king's throne room unbidden. The king initially responded with anger, to which "the queen staggered, changed color, and leaned weakly against the head upon her handmaid" (EST 15:13 or D:7) [*n.b.* our current Book of Esther is combination of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, and Biblical publishers have tried to partitioning it differently; hence the use of letters]. But God changed the king's disposition to gentleness, and he stated the following Latin phrase at the bottom of the mural: *non morieris non enim pro te sed pro omnibus haec lex constituta est* "you shall not die: for this law is not made for thee, but for all others" (EST 15:13 or D:10). From this moment Esther hosts two banquets, through which Haman's plan is ultimately undermined and he even loses his very life.

Certainly Esther's beauty and faithfulness is a very appropriate prefiguration for the Blessed Mother. In particular regards to her Assumption (i.e. moving past death), we can see how the king's quote to Esther is very fitting for this mystery. In regards to the mural, the image is that of Revelation 12:1, "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her had a crown of twelve stars". We have already examined St. John's use of this image (cf. art 4); nonetheless, it's worth emphasizing that this particular passage captures her elevated, sinless status and victory over mortality and evil...hence the moon under her feet. How beautiful it is that the two angels by her side have a rosary in hand!

The Old Testament Tondo is that of Judith, with the Latin phrase *To Gloria Jerusalem* "You are the glory of Jerusalem." We have looked at her story before (cf. art. 16), and this address to her has been traditionally appropriated to Mary in a Latin Gregorian chant antiphon, honoring Mary. The New Testament Tondo has inscribed the Latin phrase *non videre corruptionem* "not to see corruption." St. Peter and St. Paul quote this line from Psalm 16:10, to argue that King David was prophesying about Jesus, whose body did not see corruption (ACTS 2:27, 13:35).

Finally, three of the escutcheons directly point to Mary. First is the Latin phrase *Exaltata Est* "She has been exalted." Second is the Latin phrase *Sancta Dei Genitrix* "Holy Mother of God." Third is the name of Mary, *Maria* using superimposed letters. The final escutcheon is a hysterical marker, commemorating the work that was completed: "During the pontificate of Pope Pius XII, with Karl Joseph occupying the Cathedra of this Church of Toledo, Jan de Rosen painted the mysteries of the Rosary in the year of the Lord 1945."

Fr. Nathan Bockrath

“Our Citizenship is in Heaven” (PHIL 3:20)



We now arrive to the 5th Glorious Mystery of the Rosary, the Crowning of Mary, Queen of Heaven. Unlike the previous depicted mysteries of the Rosary in the Cathedral, this was completed by a different artist (i.e. Felix Lieftuchter, and not Jan de Rosen). Furthermore, it is done in a different style and location from the rest, that being the central apse of the Cathedral. At the center is Mary, being crowned queen by the Holy Trinity (Jesus on the left, the Father on the right, and Holy Spirit depicted as a dove between them). A sense of fulfillment is implicitly expressed as previous Old Testament covenants are reflected in the scene: sunlight pointing to the original covenant of creation; rainbows to the 2nd covenant with Noah; the cloud points to the covenant at Sinai with Moses; and the wall underneath points to Solomon’s Temple that is emblematic of the Davidic covenant. In addition to these implicit images, the artist makes clear his intention with the Latin inscription: *Ecclesia Triumphans*, “the Church Triumphant.” Traditionally the Church has been understood in three levels, and the top level, the “Church Triumphant,” is the ultimate goal as it is the faithful who are in eternity with our Lord. No surprise from her unwavering faithfulness, Mary is at the center of the Church Triumphant.

The Blessed Mother is surrounded by exultant choirs of angels and reverential companies of early Christian saints: St. John the Baptist, heading a band of confessors and martyrs on the left; and St. Ann leading a group of martyrs and holy women on the right. Directly underneath the her, robed in white, are the twelve Apostles. One step below the Apostles, clad in colors are the founders of religious orders, church doctors of the East and West, kings and queens, and defenders and expounders and exemplars of the faith. On the left side is: Elizabeth of Hungary, Catherine of Sienna, Jerome, Ambrose, Francis de Sales, Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Ignatius, Patrick, and Theresa of Avila. On the right is: Dominic, Alphonsus, Clara, Francis of Assisi, Athanasius, Basil, Charles Borromeo, Bernard, Anthony the Hermit, Helena, Monica, and King Edward of England.

At the very bottom of the fresco, is depicted the 3rd level of the Church: the “Church Suffering” or Purgatory. In this dramatic scene, there are the purifying flames of Purgatory as well as angels leading several souls from there into Paradise. Below the fresco are the Latin words *Et in Unam, Sanctam, Catholicam, et Apostolicam Ecclesiam*, which is taken from the Nicene Creed, indicating the four essential characteristics or marks of the Church of God: “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.” With this emphasis on the Church, the artist connects the 5th Glorious Mystery with Mary’s role as the mother of the Church as well as the model to which the Church is to follow. Furthermore, the fresco implicitly incorporates you and I into the scene as well. As mentioned, the fresco displays the 1st and 3rd levels of the Church, what is not displayed is the 2nd level, the Church militant, which is us working through this life. In other words, when we come to worship our Lord in the Cathedral, we complete the fresco as we complete the full sense of Church in its three levels. Through our Mother’s intercession, may we follow her example and so fully become One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church!