

Link to Liturgy



4th Sunday of Advent The Visitation

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Lessons and Discussions

Page 5 – The Visitation

“Mary set out”

Page 7 – Hope

“Blessed are you who believed”

Page 11 – Mary, the Mediatrix of Grace

“Blessed is the fruit of your womb”

Introit Entrance Antiphon – Roman Missal

This should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred.

Rorate celi

Is 45: 8

I

S Kies, let the Just One come forth like the dew, *

let him descend from the clouds like the rain. The earth

will open up and give birth to our Sa- vior.

Alternate options:

- Here I am to Worship
- Prepare the Way
- Ave Maria (Angela Ausmus Gill)
- Ave Maris Stella (Angela Ausmus Gill)
- Light of the World (Remnant)
- Magnificat (Remnant)
- Mother Mary (Remnant)
- Salve Regina (Angela Ausmus Gill)
- Totus Tuus (Remnant)

Collect – Roman Missal

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
Your grace into our hearts,
That we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
Was made known by the message of an Angel,
May by his Passion and Cross
Be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

- [37] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 6, 37.2
- [38] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary 887-888
- [39] Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary, 344-345
- [40] John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater
- [41] John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater
- [42] Luke 2:29-32
- [43] Luke 2:49
- [44] John 2:5
- [45] *Against Heresies*, 3, 22, 19
- [46] Divine Intimacy pgs. 84
- [47] Hardon, Catholic Catechism pg. 166
- [48] Hardon, Catholic Catechism pg. 166
- [49] CCC 618
- [50] John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater
- [51] Lumen Gentium 62.
- [52] cf. Hardon, Catholic Catechism pg. 171
- [53] Hardon, Catholic Catechism pg. 171

R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made know by the message of an angel may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

“The End” Notes

- [1] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 6, 37.1
- [2] Divine Intimacy pg. 78
- [3] Divine Intimacy pg. 78
- [4] Pseudo-Gregory the Wonderworker, Homily II on the Annunciation
- [5] CCC 2676
- [6] cf. John Paul II, Homily, 31 May 1979
- [7] Divine Intimacy pgs. 83-84
- [8] Catechism of the Catholic Church - 2677
- [9] Fernandez, In Conversation with God 6, 37.1
- [10] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 1 21.2
- [11] Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary, 882
- [12] CCC 1818
- [13] CCC 1820
- [14] Isaiah 45:8
- [15] The Order of the Mass
- [16] John 6:54
- [17] Romans 5:20
- [18] Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 257
- [19] Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 257
- [20] Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 257
- [21] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 1 21.1
- [22] Matthew 12:32
- [23] Roman Catholic Daily Missal; 1962; The Most Necessary Prayers
- [24] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 1 21.1
- [25] R. A. Knox, Sermon on Christmas
- [26] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 1 21.2
- [27] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 1 21.2
- [28] CCC 1820
- [29] J. Escriva, Friends of God, 286
- [30] Divine Intimacy pg. 78
- [31] John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater 12.1
- [32] Divine Intimacy pgs. 84
- [33] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 1 21.1
- [34] Lumen Gentium, 57
- [35] J. Escriva, Christ is passing by, 144
- [36] Divine Intimacy pgs. 84

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Gospel Reading – Luke 1:29-45 – Roman Missal

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke
- Glory to you O Lord

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

The Gospel of the Lord.
- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 4th Sunday of Advent

From a treatise against the heresy of Noetus by Saint Hippolytus, priest
The manifestation of the hidden mystery

There is only one God, brethren, and we learn about him only from sacred Scripture. It is therefore our duty to become acquainted with what Scripture proclaims and to investigate its teachings thoroughly. We should believe them in the sense that the Father wills, thinking of the Son in the way the Father wills, and accepting the teaching he wills to give us with regard to the Holy Spirit. Sacred Scripture is God's gift to us and it should be understood in the way that he intends: we should not do violence to it by interpreting it according to our own preconceived ideas.

God was all alone and nothing existed but himself when he determined to create the world. He thought of it, willed it, spoke the word and so made it. It came into being instantaneously, exactly as he had willed. It is enough then for us to be aware of a single fact: nothing is coeternal with God. Apart from God there was simply nothing else. Yet although he was alone, he was manifold because he lacked neither reason, wisdom, power, nor counsel. All things were in him and he himself was all. At a moment of his own choosing and in a manner determined by himself, God manifested his Word, and through him he made the whole universe.

When the Word was hidden within God himself he was invisible to the created world, but God made him visible. First God gave utterance to his voice, engendering light from light, and then he sent his own mind into the world as its Lord. Visible before to God alone and not to the world, God made him visible so that the world could be saved by seeing him. This mind that entered our world was made known as the Son of God. All things came into being through him; but he alone is begotten by the Father.

The Son gave us the law and the prophets, and he filled the prophets with the Holy Spirit to compel them to speak out. Inspired by the Father's power, they were to proclaim the Father's purpose and his will.

So the Word was made manifest, as Saint John declares when, summing up all the sayings of the prophets, he announces that this is the Word through whom the whole universe was made. He says: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through him all things came into being; not one thing was created without him.* And further on he adds: *The world was made through him, and yet the world did not know him. He entered his own creation, and his own did not receive him.*

Responsory – Office of Readings

A little child is born to us, and he shall be called the mighty God.

– He himself will sit upon the throne of David his father to rule; the authority of David rests on his shoulders.

All Grace, that Jesus, Our One True Mediator, Who is the King of All Nations, may Reign in every heart. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Marian Antiphon – Alma Redemptoris Mater

V. **A** L-ma * Red-emptó-ris Ma-ter, quæ pérv-i-a cae-li Por-ta manes, et stella ma-ris, succú-re cadé-nti, Sú-rg-e-re qui cu-rat, pópulo: Tu quæ genu-ísti, Na-tú-ra mi-rá-nte, tu-um sanctum Ge-ni-tó-rem, Virgo pri-us ac posté-ri us, Gabri-élis ab o-re Sumens il-lud Ave, pecca-tó-rum mi-se-ré-re.

Alma Redemptoris Mater (English Translation)

Loving mother of the Redeemer, open door to heaven and star of the sea, come quickly to the aid of thy people, fallen indeed but striving to stand again. To nature's astonishment thou wert the mother of thy holy Creator without ceasing to be a virgin, and heard from Gabriel that greeting: "Hail." Have pity on us sinners.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

unique source.”[50] As the Second Vatican Council taught, “This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues without interruption from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal consummation of all the elect. Taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to procure for us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her motherly love she cares for her Son’s sisters and brothers who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home.”[51]

Why do Protestants object to Mary being the mediatrix of grace? Protestants believe that giving merit to anyone other than Jesus takes away from Christ’s sacrifice on the cross and our salvation. However, as we have explained at length, Mary’s intercession and mediation takes nothing away nor diminishes Christ’s mercy, grace, and mediation upon the world. In fact, since the Second Vatican Council and the work through ecumenism, “Mary is coming to be more and more honored in Christian Churches of every tradition.”[52] “Catholics who take their faith in Christ for granted may be surprised to find how sensitive other Christians are to what seems to be a corollary of this faith: devotion to Mary and belief in her influential intercession. The Council’s teaching will serve as a welcome corrective, not to be less devoted to her but to grow in a devotion that is strong in its foundations and truly attractive to all who love Christ and therefore wish to grow in the love of his Mother.”[53]

Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – Consecration to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

O Mary, Most Holy and Immaculate Mother of God, of Jesus, our Victim- High Priest, True Prophet, and Sovereign King, I come to you as the Mediatrix of All Grace, for that is truly what you are. O Fountain of all Grace! O Fairest of Roses! Most Pure Spring! Unsullied Channel of all of God’s Grace! Receive me, Most Holy Mother! Present me and my every need to the Most Holy Trinity! That having been made pure and holy in His Sight through your hands, they may return to me, through you, as graces and blessing. I give and consecrate myself to you, Mary, Mediatrix of

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

– He himself will sit upon the throne of David his father to rule; the authority of David rests on his shoulders.

The Visitation – Lesson and Discussion

“Mary set out”

The Gospel reading for this Sunday is the story of the Visitation, when Mary went out to see her cousin Elizabeth and upon her greeting begins her mission of bringing Christ to the world.

How far is Judah? We hear in the Gospel reading that Mary makes haste to her cousin Elizabeth in the hill country of Judah, a journey that would take her four or five days from Nazareth.

Why does Mary leave so quickly? “The Blessed Virgin, having learned from the angel about Elizabeth’s pregnancy, moved by charity, hurries to lend a hand with her household chores. Nobody obliges her to go: God, through the angel, hadn’t asked her to do so, nor had Elizabeth looked for help either. Mary could have remained at home to get on with preparing for the arrival of her Son, the Messiah; but she joyfully sets out on the journey ‘with haste’ and goes to offer Elizabeth her homely assistance.”[1] “...because of her faith and obedience, she hurriedly leaves, immediately after the angel’s annunciation, to visit her cousin Elizabeth and offer her help as ‘handmaid’ of men as well as of God. The great service of Mary to mankind is therefore to bring Christ to man just as she brought him to Elizabeth.”[2]

The Annunciation, in which Mary accepts God’s Will, led to the Visitation, in which Mary lives out God’s will. Mary’s faith led to a charitable work, just as our own faith should lead to good works, beginning with our own families. . When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize, she was asked, “What can we do to promote world peace?” She answered, “Go home and love your family.” Our Blessed Mother went with haste to help her family. Our family needs us; we must make haste to help them. **Why is it sometimes easier to help others rather than our family?**

Why is Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit? It is because of Mary’s Visitation. Mary brings God into her home and upon her greeting fills the whole room with the Holy Spirit. “Through the Virgin-Mother, the Savior visits the house of Zachary in very fact, and fills it with the Holy Spirit, so that Elizabeth discovers

the mystery being accomplished in Mary, and John rejoices in his mother's womb. All this takes place because the Blessed Mother believed God's word, and, believing, offered herself to the divine will." [3] "That house was transformed by the presence of Jesus and Mary. Her greeting was efficacious: it filled Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit. With her tongue, through her prophetic utterance, she caused a river of divine gifts to spring up in her cousin as from a fountain... In effect, wherever she who is 'full of grace' goes, everything is filled to overflowing with joy." [4]

How is Mary "blessed among women"? "Mary is 'blessed among women' because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word. Abraham, because of his faith, became a blessing for all the nations of the earth. Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive him who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the 'fruit of thy womb.'" [5]

See also Lesson – Blessed Among Women

What does the Visitation reveal to us? First, it reveals the interior life of Mary: one of humble service and selfless love for whoever needs her. [6] In Mary's Visitation, we also see the humanity of the unborn baby Jesus; "She is not alone: the Word made flesh is with her, and with her literally crosses the mountains and hills to meet his creatures whom he has come to save. So Mary begins her mission of bringing Christ to the world. She carries him in silence, but God living in her reveals himself... Mary teaches all who believe, and especially the apostles, that we bring Christ to our brothers not so much by word, as by a life of union with him, making room for him and letting him grow in our own hearts." [7]

Mary is not only an example of humble service and selfless love, but also an example of prayer. "Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: 'Let it be to me according to your word.' By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: 'Thy will be done.'" [8] This part of the Lord's Prayer is at times difficult to accept, but we are never alone in this prayer—Mary is with us. We must pray for the grace to live our prayer "Thy will be done" out in our life, just as Mary was "full of Grace".

How do we mediate? Even though no creature can mediate salvation, God does not will for us to do nothing in regards to the salvation of our souls and that of others. "The question is what purpose [we] serve and what sense do [we] mediate. They can help the cause of mediation in the only way that human beings (or creatures) can contribute to the work of salvation, namely, by their willing response to grace: either better disposing themselves or others for divine grace, or interceding with God to give his grace, or freely co-operating with grace when conferred." [47] For this reason, we can say that Mary is the mediatrix of all grace—because she was full of all grace. "We presume that she —co-operated fully with the graces she received, to save her own soul. But she mediated for others, as well, by her vicarious assistance to the rest of mankind. She deserves the title mediatrix because she co-operated in a unique way with Christ in his redemptive labors on earth, and because in heaven she continues interceding for those who are still working out their salvation as pilgrims in the Church Militant or souls suffering in purgatory." [48]

Christ calls all of us into His salvific work. "The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the 'one mediator between God and men.' But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, 'the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery' is offered to all men. He calls his disciples to 'take up [their] cross and follow [him],' for 'Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps.' In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries. This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering." [49]

Is there another way to understand the doctrine of Mary as mediatrix? A different way to see Mary as mediatrix of grace is to see her universal role as mother. "In effect, Mary's mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood. It possesses a specifically maternal character, which distinguishes it from the mediation of the other creatures who in various and always subordinate ways share in the one mediation of Christ, although her own mediation is also a shared mediation. In fact, while it is true that 'no creature could ever be classed with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer,' at the same time 'the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise among creatures to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this

itation, she brings Jesus in the womb to visit and impact the lives of Sts. Elizabeth John the Baptist. We recall both of these events each time we pray the Hail Mary. In the Nativity, she gives birth to the Savior of the World, which we recall each time we say sing the “Gloria in excelsis Deo” at Mass. In the Presentation at the Temple, Mary brings her Son to the prophet Simon. Each night at Compline (Night Prayer) the Church exclaims with him, “Lord, now you have let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.”[42] In the Finding of the Boy Jesus at the Temple, Jesus tells Mary, “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”[43] and then in the Wedding at Cana, Mary says to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”[44] While in the temple Mary “did not understand what he said”, by the Wedding at Cana, she now understands the importance of her Son’s mission and ushers in His first miracle. Mary accompanies her Son to Calvary and then holds Him in her arms, just as she held him on the night of the Nativity. She is present when the Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles. Lastly, it is no wonder that she who followed her Son so faithful in this life would also follow Him to Heaven in the mysteries of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Coronation as the Queen of Heaven and earth.

So then why call Mary “mediatrix” of grace? Saint Irenaeus wrote, “As by a virgin the human race had been bound to death, by a virgin it is saved, the balance being preserved, a virgin’s disobedience by a virgin’s obedience”[45]. Eve made the fall of humanity possible, just as Mary made our Redemption possible (by consenting to bring the Savior into the world),. However, Jesus is the one who actually redeemed us by His death and resurrection. “His splendor is so great that it cannot stay hidden, but acts through his mother, for as soon as ‘the voice of your greeting came to my ears’ – says Elizabeth – ‘the babe in my womb leapt for joy’. What the angel had predicted to Zachary comes true: ‘Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb.’ The Precursor is sanctified before his birth through the mediation of Mary, who, by being Mother of the Son of God, is also mediatrix of grace and holiness, not just for John the Baptist, the greatest among those born of woman, but for all men of all times and all peoples.”[46]

How do we apply the Visitation to our lives? When we pray and contemplate upon the Second Joyful Mystery, God “invites us to give ourselves promptly, happily and unpretentiously to the people around us. Very often the best service we can offer is simply to share with them the happiness that overflows from our hearts. But we can only do this if we stay very close to Our Lord through the faithful fulfillment of the moments of prayer we have throughout the day.”[9] **Do we ‘bring’ Christ (joy) with us wherever we go, be it to work, or when visiting friends or someone who is sick? Does our presence habitually cause people to be cheered up?**

Hope – Lesson and Discussion

“Blessed are you who believed”

As we come to the close of Advent, we wait in grateful joy for the coming of the Lord. With Mary, we are united by a great hope for our salvation through her Son. “From the stable at Bethlehem to the moment of his ascension into Heaven, Jesus Christ proclaims a message of hope. Jesus himself is our only hope. He is the firm pledge that we will attain to the marvelous future we have been promised. We look towards the cave at Bethlehem in watchful hope, understanding that it is only in his company that we can boldly approach God the Father.”[10]

What is hope? “The theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it.”[11] Hope also, “responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men’s activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.”[12]

Who do we put our hope in? We are to put our hope in Jesus Christ. “Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus’ preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the ‘hope that does not disappoint.’ Hope is the ‘sure and steadfast anchor of the soul...that enters... where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.”[13]

Like the dry ground that awaits the dew fall, all of humanity awaits Jesus, the Eternal Word that descends like the dew fall. This Sunday's Entrance Antiphon says, "Drop down dew from above, you heaven, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Savior." [14] In the Second Eucharistic Prayer the priest prays makes reference to this scripture, "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." [15]

Our hope is in the Lord, who is physically present in the Eucharist. Jesus will be with us in eternal communion with heaven, but until then is temporally with us in the Most Blessed Sacrament. If we do not practice this temporal communion with Jesus, how can we have eternal communion with Him? This is why Jesus says, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day." [16] Just as mortal sin keeps us from temporal communion in the Eucharist, mortal sin keeps us from eternal communion – Heaven. We must repent and keep our hope in Christ, for "where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more." [17] God's grace is stronger than our sins.

Where do we obtain hope? One receives the virtue of hope "... at baptism together with sanctifying grace and having the possession of God as its primary object." [18]

How does hope benefit us? "It belongs to the will and makes a person desire eternal life, which is the heavenly vision of God, and gives one the confidence of receiving the grace necessary to reach heaven." [19] "Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: 'Let us...put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.' It affords us joy even under trial: 'Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation.'" [20]

Is hope necessary for salvation? Yes. "The virtue of hope is necessary for salvation. Acts of hope are also necessary for salvation and are commanded by God for all who have come to the use of reason." [20] It is one of the three theological virtues along with faith and charity, which are all to believe in and to use.

demption, therefore, was indirect and remote, and derived from her voluntary devotion to the service of Christ. Under the Cross she suffered and sacrificed with him, but subordinate to him in such a way that all the efficacy of her oblation depended on that of her Son.

On the second stage of mediation, Mary co-operates by her maternal intercession in applying Christ's redemptive grace to human beings, called the subjective redemption. This does not imply that the faithful must pray for all graces through Mary, nor that her intercession is inherently necessary for the distribution of divine blessing, but that, according to God's special ordinance, the graces merited by Christ are conferred through the actual intercessory mediation of his mother. Recent popes and the Second Vatican Council have spoken in favor of this type of mediation, which finds support in patristic tradition." [39]

Isn't calling Mary the mediatrix of all graces contrary to the doctrine that Jesus is the sole mediator between God and man? Jesus is the one mediator and the primary mediator because of His death on the cross. Nothing can ever take away from that. "The Church knows and teaches with Saint Paul that there is only one mediator: 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all' (1 Tim 2:5-6). 'The maternal role of Mary toward people in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power': it is mediation in Christ." [40]

Blessed Pope John Paul II continues, "The Church knows and teaches that 'all the saving influences of the Blessed Virgin on mankind originate... from the divine pleasure. They flow forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rest on his mediation, depend entirely on it, and draw all their power from it. In no way do they impede the immediate union of the faithful with Christ. Rather, they foster this union.' This saving influence is sustained by the Holy Spirit, who, just as he overshadowed the Virgin Mary when he began in her the divine motherhood, in a similar way constantly sustains her solicitude for the brothers and sisters of her Son." [41]

ACTIVITY – Mary and the Mysteries

Give examples of how the mysteries of Rosary show Our Lady cooperates with the saving mission of her Son. In the Annunciation, her yes allows the Word to become Flesh. In the Vis-

through him all things were made.” Jesus is a divine person who assumed a human nature, therefore He is one person with two natures: human and divine.

How does Mary’s role factor in with her Son? “The Virgin Mary is so pure, so transparent, that her very presence reveals the splendor and the light of Christ. Men ‘who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,’ deprived of light and incapable of welcoming it, have such need of recourse to her motherly intercession. Mary is the way that leads to Christ; she is the mother who dispels darkness, who prepares hearts to receive the Redeemer.[36] “Mary and Jesus are always together. Jesus’ most wonderful deeds are performed, as they are now, in intimate union with his Mother, the Mediatrix of all graces.”[37]

What does mediatrix mean? In the Catechism mediatrix or mediator means, “One who links or reconciles separate or opposing parties. Thus Jesus Christ is the ‘one mediator between God and the human race’ (1 Tim. 2:5). Through his sacrificial offering he has become high priest and unique mediator who has gained for us access to God’s saving grace for humanity. Moreover, Mary too is sometimes called Mediatrix in virtue of her cooperation in the saving mission of Christ, who alone is the unique mediator between God and humanity.”[38]

Fr. Hardon gives a fuller explanation on Mary as the mediatrix of grace (*please read carefully*): “A title of the Blessed Virgin as mediator of grace. There are two aspects of this mediation. It is certain in Catholic theology that, since Mary gave birth to the Redeemer, who is source of all grace, she is in this way the channel of all graces to mankind. But it is only probable, as a legitimate opinion, that since Mary’s Assumption into heaven no grace is received by humans without her actual intercessory cooperation.

On the first level of mediation, Mary freely co-operated with God in consenting to the Incarnation, giving birth to her Son and thus sharing with him in spirit the labor of the his passion and death. Yet Christ alone truly offered the sacrifice of atonement on the Cross. Mary gave him moral support in this action. She is therefore not entitled to the name ‘priest, as several Roman documents legislate. As explained by the Council of Florence in 1441, Christ ‘conquered the enemy of the human race alone’. In the same way he alone acquired the grace of redemption for the whole human race, including Mary. Her part in the objective re-

What is the opposite of hope? The opposite of hope is despair, a lack of faith in God. “The ones who become discouraged are not those who undergo difficulties and feel pain. It is those, rather, who do not aspire to sanctity and eternal life, those who despair of ever reaching them...”[21] Despair is one of the sins against the Holy Spirit.

What are the other sins against the Holy Spirit? Jesus says in Matthew’s gospel, “And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”[22] In addition to despair, the sins against the Holy Spirit include Presumption upon God’s mercy — Impugning known truth — Envy of another’s spiritual good — Obstinacy in sin — Final impenitence.[23] Most of these sins are permanent by nature. For example, obstinacy in sin and final impenitence is a firm decision to not choose God. Presumption upon God’s mercy and despair is a declaration that either we are or are not saved. We are either presuming that we are saved or in despair and believe that God’s mercy is not enough for us. When we despair, we are looking at the Cross and saying to Jesus, “Your Grace is not greater than my sin!” To impugn or cause doubt is a direct offense against Jesus Christ who is Truth. To envy, or be saddened by others goodness or holiness, is a direct offense against God, the source of all Good.

Why do people lose hope and despair? There is no singular answer for this question because there are many reasons a person may fall into the sin of despair. “The attitude of the former is shaped by a lack of faith, by comfort seeking, lukewarmness and an excessive attachment to earthly goods, which they consider to be the only good things worth having.”[24] One common modern reason for despair is the sin of materialism. R. A. Knox once wrote, “In proportion as the world grows weary of its Christian hope, the alternative is materialism, of a type with which we are already familiar — that and nothing else.”[25] “Our Lord himself points out to us that the principal objects of Christian hope are not the good things of this life which moth and rust consume, and which thieves can break in and steal, but the treasures of the incorruptible heritage and, above all, the supreme happiness of the eternal possession of God.”[26] We only have to think of all the presents we have received over the years or hope to receive in the future. How many of us still have *all* the gifts we received from every year we have lived? Almost all have been dis-

missed. We must remember our hope is never in something man-made or material, but in Jesus Christ alone.

The great paradox of the forth Sunday of Advent is that in the midst of hope for material goods (Christmas presents), which leaves man empty, a lasting happiness, Jesus Christ is offered. Hope in Jesus Christ is real and lasting.

What does hope lead us to? “Hope leads us to abandon ourselves in God and to do all that we can to undertake a deliberate ascetical struggle. This struggle will move us to begin again many times, to be constant in the apostolate and patient in adversity; to have a more supernatural outlook on life...”[27]

How do we express hope? Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.”[28]

What does Mary teach us about hope? St. Jose Maria Escriva said, “Mary teaches us to hope. ‘All generations will call me blessed’, she proclaimed. Humanly speaking, how could she hope for such a thing? Who was she, in the eyes of her contemporaries? The great heroines of the Old Testament – Judith, Esther, Deborah – won a measure of human renown even here on earth... What a contrast between Our Lady’s hope and our own impatience! We call so often upon God to reward us at once for any little good we may have done. For us, no sooner does the very first difficulty appear than we begin to complain. Often we find ourselves incapable of sustaining our efforts, of keeping our hope alive.”[29] “The example of Mary teaches us how a simple creature can join in the mystery of Christ and bring Christ into the world through her ‘yes’ – a ‘yes’ which is continually repeated in faith and lived in loving obedience to God’s will.”[30]

How does Mary show perfect hope? Mary shows us perfect hope through her complete faith in God. “While every word of Elizabeth’s greeting is filled with meaning, her final words would seem to have fundamental importance: ‘And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord’ (Lk. 1:45). These words can be linked with the title ‘full of grace’ of the angel’s greeting. Both of these texts reveal an essential Mariological content, namely the truth about Mary, who has become really present in the mystery of Christ precisely because she ‘has believed.’ The fullness of grace announced by the angel means the gift of God himself. Mary’s

faith, proclaimed by Elizabeth at the Visitation, indicates how the Virgin of Nazareth responded to this gift.”[31]

What example does Mary leave for all Christians who have hope? “At the same time she is a model for every Christian who, once he has received Christ, must give him to his brothers. Likewise the life of a Christian ought to be so pure, so bright, and genuine that it reveals the Lord in every action. Christ, ‘splendor of eternal light and sun of justice’ should shine out in our conduct as Christians, and by this dispel the darkness, doubts, errors, prejudices and uncertainties on the part of so many who perhaps do not believe because they have not met any one who knew how to give an effective witness to the gospel. The Christian prays for himself and for all his brothers by trusting all to Mary’s powerful intercession: ‘O radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice, come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.’”[32] “The Christian knows that he has to live this advent beside Our Lady every day of his life if he wants to be certain of attaining the only thing in the whole of his existence that is really important – finding Christ in this life, and afterwards being with him in eternity.”[33]

Mary, the Mediatrix of Grace – Lesson and Discussion

“Blessed is the fruit of your womb”

Anything that Mary does is solely for the glory of her Son, Jesus Christ. As the Second Vatican Council puts it, “This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death.”[34] “If you seek Mary you will find Jesus. And you will learn a bit more about what is in the heart of a God who humbles himself”. [35] Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Where does He get His humanity? Jesus received His humanity from Mary. In the womb, Mary’s blood and oxygen travelled to Jesus through his umbilical cord; her very own body gave Him life and nourishment. Anything and everything that makes up Jesus’ humanity is from Mary.

Where does Jesus receive His divinity? This is somewhat of a trick question, for Jesus did not “get” or “receive” His divinity, for He always was, is, and ever shall be divine. As we say in the Nicene Creed, “the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;