



LEGION OF MARY  
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# *Maria Legionis*



## *Puer Natus Est Nobis*

Unto us a Child is Born

ISAIAH 9:6

# The Beauty of Mary

By Fr. Pat Collins CM

**Introduction:** During the Second-Vatican Council there was the intention of publishing a document on Mary. But then that plan was replaced by another, namely to talk about the mother of Jesus in chapter 8 of the Constitution on the Church. This contextualised Marian doctrine within an ecclesial context, e.g., Mary as Mother of the Church. Here I will look at three interrelated points.

1. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary
2. Mary's role as Mother of the Church
3. Mary's role as our gracious advocate

## 1. Mary the Immaculate Conception



When Mary appeared to St Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes in 1858 she responded to her oft-repeated question: “who are you?” by replying: “I am the Immaculate Conception.” This response echoed what Our Lady had already said to St Catherine Labouré in the Rue de Bac in 1830. Many years later in the 20th century, St Maximilian Kolbe, who had an enormous devotion to Our Lady, was intrigued by the meaning and implications of Mary's announcement that she was the Immaculate Conception. She didn't say that she was conceived or born immaculate; she said: “I am the Immaculate Conception,” which is actually a strange phrase. For many years Maximilian reflected upon what

Mary had said about herself. He began to make notes with a view to writing a book on the subject. Just before he was arrested by the Nazis in 1941, he dictated his key ideas to a secretary who wrote them down. His thought is dense, profound, innovative, and not easy to express in simple, clear terms. Having reflected quite a bit on what he said, I will do my best to give you some idea of what he had in mind.

Mary is the human created Immaculate Conception who from the beginning of her existence was free from original and personal sin. That was why the angel Gabriel was able to greet her by saying: “Hail, full of grace.”

### **Kolbe said:**

*It is above all an interior union, a union of Mary's essence with the “essence” of the Holy Spirit. The Holy*

*Spirit dwells in her, lives in her. This was true from the first instance of her existence. It is always true; it will always be true.*

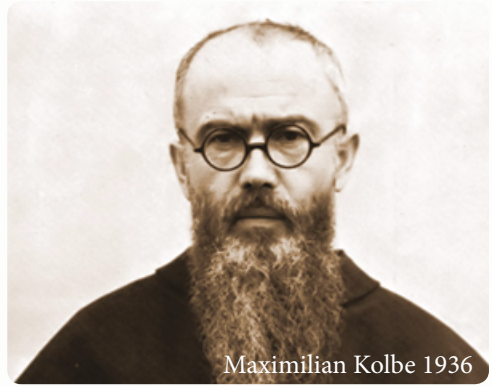
Therefore, we can say, Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit. Although she was, and is a creature and not divine by nature, she has been divinised by the free gift of the grace of her Son. As a result, in her life the Holy Spirit becomes visible. So we could say of Mary: “He or she who sees her, sees the Holy Spirit, just as those who see her divine Son see the Father.”

Kolbe was keen to avoid any misunderstanding of what he was saying, so he wrote:

*The Holy Spirit is in the Immaculate as the second person of the most Holy Trinity is in Jesus, but with this difference: there are in Jesus two natures, the divine and the human, and one sole person, the divine. The nature and person of the Immaculate are distinct from the nature and person of the Holy Spirit.*

If you are not into theology you might not follow what exactly Kolbe is saying here. He’s stating that Jesus is the divine, uncreated embodiment of the Father, whereas Mary, is the human, created embodiment of the Holy Spirit which was given to her in an anticipatory way, in virtue of the future death and resurrection of her Son.

Speaking about one important implication of the doctrine of



Maximilian Kolbe 1936

the Immaculate Conception, St. Maximilian felt that it might explain the fall of one third of the angels in heaven. He wrote:

*When he had created the angels, God willed that they should spontaneously give him proof that they would always and everywhere accomplish his will. He revealed to them the mystery of the incarnation and announced that one day he would call into existence a human creature made of body and soul, a creature that he would raise to the dignity of Mother of God.*

Kolbe maintains that when they heard about Mary as the Immaculate Conception, who would be the future Mother of God, some angels rebelled. They realised that although Mary would be a human being with a material body, she would be elevated far above their status as archangels and angels. When they realised this, they envied and resented Mary’s future dignity and role – and they said to God: “we don’t accept this; we will not serve on these grounds.” So they lost their place in heaven and were cast down to earth (Rev. 12:2).

I was reading in a study Bible that this passage is one of key importance in the Book of Revelation because it depicts the struggle between the people of God, represented by Mary, and the power of the evil one. In Catholic circles Mary is sometimes depicted as the Immaculate Conception, the new Eve, who crushes the head of the serpent with her heel. In other words, together with her Son, she is mighty in the combat with the powers of evil. Of course, inevitably with her Son, the victory will be his - and hers and ours, through the conquest won over the evil one by the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.

## 2. Mary as Mother of the Church

Because of her pre-eminent role, Mary is seen as the model and mother of the Church. It is stating the obvious to say that she was the mother of Jesus. But ever since our baptism, Christ has come to live within us by the working of the Holy Spirit and as a result we become members of his mystical body on earth. Mary is the mother of Christ's body the Church. That role was intimated in Jn. 19:25-27 when Jesus said from the cross: "Woman, here is



your son," and to the disciple: "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. As St Paul VI said in his Credo of the People of God:

"The Blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role with regard to Christ's members, cooperating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed."

In this context it is worth recalling the fact that in 1815 when Catherine Labouré was aged nine, her mother died. It is said that following her mother's funeral, she picked up a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and kissed it saying: "Now you will be my Mother." As our heavenly mother, Mary intercedes for us.

## 3. Mary as our gracious advocate

The roots of Mary's intercessory role are to be found in the Old Testament. At one time in Israel the king could have had many wives. In order to avoid rivalries and disputes, the queen mother was the first lady in the land. The ordinary people could approach her with their requests, and she would present them to her son, the king. She was their intercessor, who pleaded on their behalf.

### i. King Solomon and Bathsheba

In 1 Kings 2:19-20 there is an example of what was involved. It described the relationship that existed between King Solomon and his mother Bathsheba. In the text we are told:

"And the king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; and he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the

king's mother, and she sat on his right. Then she said: "I have one small request to make of you, do not refuse me." And the king said to her: "make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you."

## ii. King Ahasuerus and Esther

On another occasion we are told that Esther, a Jewish woman, was "lovely and beautiful" (Esth. 2:3). She was married to king Ahasuerus. At one stage the queen heard that Haman, one of her husband's advisors, had hatched a vindictive plot to kill all her fellow Jews in the kingdom. As a result, she interceded with the King.

"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favour and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" He said: "Now write another decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring- for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked" (Esth. 8:3-8).

Now you notice here that having interceded with her husband, Esther's request is granted and furthermore the king hands his authority over to her – she can write the letter and stamp it

with the king's signet ring on his behalf and, in so doing, that document was going to be obeyed by the people in the kingdom and no harm would come to the Jews.

## iii. The Marriage Feast of Cana

In the story of the Marriage Feast of Cana we have an outstanding New Testament example of the spiritual relationship between the mother and the king. We are told in Jn. 2:3-5: "When the wine failed the mother of Jesus said to him: "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her: "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you."



Jesus recognised that her spontaneous impulse of loving concern was inspired by the Spirit and therefore an expression of the Father's will. Just as she had given birth to Jesus as a result of her obedient faith at the Annunciation, so now she was giving birth to his public ministry, as a result of her compassionate intercession.

## Apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré

Our Lady appeared to Catherine Labouré on a number of occasions in the Rue du Bac in 1830. During the apparitions Our Lady announced her Immaculate Conception and taught the young novice the following prayer: “O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.” She also instructed her to have a medal made which was called at first: “the Medal of Mary, the Immaculate Conception.”



On 27 November 1830, Catherine reported that the Blessed Mother returned during evening meditation. She displayed herself inside an oval frame, standing upon a globe. She wore many rings set with gems that shone rays of light over the globe. Around the margin of the frame appeared the words: “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.” At that same moment Catherine heard a voice saying: “These rays are a symbol of the graces that I pour out on those who ask them of me.”



## Conclusion

As a result of the three-interrelated truths of which we have looked, we can have confidence in turning to our Mother Mary in all of our troubles.

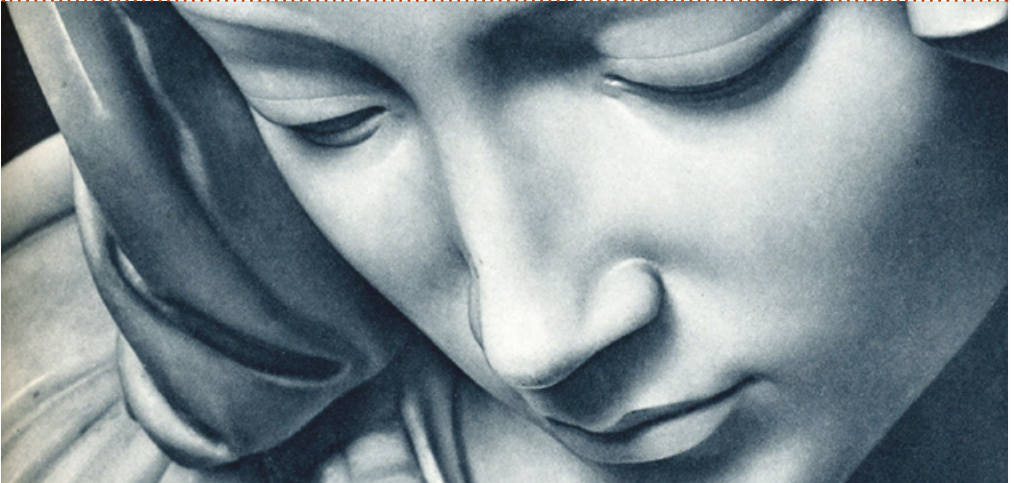
As one of our lovely Marian prayer says:

“Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of Virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me.” *Amen.*

Speaking of Mary’s intercessory role,  
someone said half joking, whole in earnest:

“Mary, because you are God’s mother you can’t say you can’t;  
because you are my mother, you won’t say you won’t;  
so you will, won’t you!”

## Final Prayer



Blessed Virgin Mary,  
who can worthily repay you with praise and thanks  
for having rescued a fallen world  
by your generous consent!  
Receive our gratitude, and by your prayers  
obtain the pardon of our sins.  
Take our prayers into the sanctuary of heaven  
and enable them to make our peace with God.  
Holy Mary, help the miserable,  
strengthen the discouraged, comfort the sorrowful,  
pray for your people, plead for the clergy,  
intercede for all women consecrated to God.  
May all who venerate you feel now your help and protection.  
Be ready to help us when we pray,  
and bring back to us the answers to our prayers.  
Make it your continual concern to pray for the people of God,  
for you were blessed by God and  
were made worthy to bear the Redeemer of the world,  
who lives and reigns forever.

*Amen.*

- Saint Augustine of Hippo