

St. John Damascene and the restoration of his hand

- The Iconoclasm controversy was initiated by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III, the Isaurian.
- In 730 he issued an edict which ordered the destruction or removal of all sacred icons.
- St. John Damascene worked in defense of the proper use of sacred images.

Living in Damascus in Syria under Muslim civil rule, the Byzantine emperor did not have power over him. For this reason Leo III wrote a letter to the Muslim caliph indicating that St. John was leading a revolt against the Muslim rule, a lie, but effective, which resulted in his being brought to the center of the city and having his right hand cut off in public. That night John lay prostrate in front of an icon of Mary – begging for her maternal help. Finally in exhaustion he passed out and when he awoke – his right hand was restored. With this hand he went on to defend victoriously in writing and preaching the use of sacred images. To honor and thank the Virgin Mary for this miraculous favor St. John painted in a third hand on the icon in front of which he prayed for help. This icon is with us to today.

I. The divine economy: God creates and saves by means of a FAMILY

A. The Trinity is a Family

1. God is not an isolated individual
2. Rather, in the Trinity there are three divine persons who live in an eternal exchange of gifts and love
3. Explain this

B. Genesis 1:28 Mankind was created in the Image of a Family

1. *Gaudet Spes 32*: mankind was created to image God in His eternal exchange of love
 - a. Mankind was not created to live in isolation
 - b. Each member of the human family shares in a mutual exchange of gifts and love
2. **Thus, no person is self-sufficient**
 - a. The little child needs the care of its parents for its physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual development
 - b. Even once we reach adulthood we find that inequalities and differences remain-These are tied to age, physical abilities, intellectual and moral aptitudes, the benefits derived from social commerce, and the distribution of wealth.

- c. We stand in need of others
- d. Math 25: 14-30 talents are not distributed equally
 - 1) These inequalities and differences belong to God's plan: He "wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular talents share the benefits with those who need them." (GS 29, CCC 1937)
- c. These inequalities necessitate that the human person live in **interdependence with others**
 - 1) This interdependence is a call from God to charity
 - a) It is a call to share the spiritual and material gifts or talents each has received with those in need, and to receive from others all he lacks in order that every person may reach his goal
 - 2) This is the principle of **Solidarity**
 - a) The virtue that practices the sharing of spiritual as well as material goods.
 - b) By putting this principle into practice, mankind reflects the life of the Trinity, living as a mutual exchange of love and gifts

C. Further, there exist certain Social Structures designed to help the development of the human person

1. On the **Natural Level**

a. The Family

1) We see that God ordained the human person to come into the world, develop, and mature to his full potential within the social structure of the family

a) As a community the family has an order, specific roles, and interdependence between the individuals

b) The roles of the different members of the family must be carried out for everything to go smoothly

b. The Political community is another social structure designed for the well-being of the persons within it

1) Also has different roles which must be carried out

c. The need for these communities flows from the inner nature of the human person, created to reflect the life of the Trinity by living in interdependence, in a mutual exchange of love with others

2. On the **Supernatural Level**

a. There is an analogy between the order of nature and the order of grace

1) Something similar happens on the natural and supernatural levels

- b. GS 32: “As God did not create man for isolation, but for the formation of social unity, so also it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals, without bond or link between them, but by making them into a single people”
 - 1) This means that our religion is not just “Jesus and me”
- c. God has chosen to save all of mankind by means of a covenant family
 - 1) Through the covenants God established with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and finally through His Son, Jesus Christ, we see that this has been God’s design from the beginning
 - 2) GS 32: “Christ commanded His Apostles to preach to all peoples the Gospel message that the human race was to become the **Family of God**... He founded after His death and resurrection a new brotherly community composed of all those who receive Him in faith and love. **This He did through His Body, which is the Church.** *There everyone, as members one of the other, would render mutual service according to the different gifts bestowed on each.* This solidarity must be constantly increased until that day on which it will be brought to perfection.

II. What is Mary’s Role in Our Salvation?

A. The answer lies in the fact that:

- 1. We are not saved in isolation, but as part of the covenant family, which is the Church

- a. This is the principle of community, which God uses in his plan of salvation
- B. God has given this family a Mother, in the order of grace
- 1. **JP II *Redemptoris Mater***
 - a. A child is dependant on its mother
 - 1) for his birth, his development, education and formation
 - b. We too in the family of the Church are dependent upon the maternal love and care of Mary, which is made fruitful by the Holy Spirit
 - c. “Motherhood always establishes a *unique and unrepeatable relationship* between two people: *between mother and child* and *between child and mother.*” (#45)
 - 1) The beauty of motherhood is that even when there are many children in one family, each child has a personal relationship with his mother. In this relationship, each child is surrounded in the same way by that maternal love on which are based the child’s development and coming to maturity as a human being.
 - d. “Motherhood in the order of grace preserves the analogy of motherhood in the order of nature”

-again, here we have the similarity between the natural and the supernatural

 - 1) Just as a natural mother has a personal relationship with each of her children and the child’s development and coming to maturity are based in a significant way on this maternal relationship

- 2) So too God desires that Mary develop a personal relationship with each of her children who share in the divine life of Jesus, her Son

The foundational Christian mystery is the Incarnation

What was Mary's role in the Incarnation?

1. During the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit came down in Person on Mary to conceive Christ in her womb.
2. She cooperated with the Holy Spirit in the *Birth and Development of Jesus*.
3. Mary cooperated with the Holy Spirit to *educate and form* Jesus as He grew to maturity.
4. Luke 2:51-52 Jesus went down with Mary and Joseph and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them.

What was the role of Jesus? What was the very first thing Jesus did?

1. Jesus *entrusted* Himself to Mary to be her little child:
2. to belong entirely to her
3. to depend totally on her
 - How much more dependent could one be than to be an embryo?
 - To be educated and formed by Mary

As this mystery of the Incarnation unfolds in time, how does the public ministry of Jesus begin?

- Through the intervention of Mary

John 2 The Wedding at Cana - Do whatever he tells you

JPII: "With these remarks, John seems to indicate that at Cana, as in the fundamental event of the Incarnation, it was Mary who introduced the Savior."

And when his ministry reached its zenith – he came to calvary

John 19:25-27: The Cross

- Redemptoris Mater 45
- It is *not* that Jesus entrusted Mary to John, she had other living relatives;
- Jesus entrusted John to Mary – *to her maternal care.*
 - John represents all disciples destined to receive the gift of divine grace
 - From the Cross, Christ entrusted all people to Mary

John 19:27 And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home

The Greek text reads instead:

- He took her for his own
- Eis ta idia
- John took her for his own mother

JPII in RM 45

- This indicates everything expressed by the intimate relationship of a child with its mother.
- The best word to describe this relationship is entrustment

At the Cross

Jesus extended the maternal role of Mary to all those who would receive His life in their soul, “*Behold your son.*”

Galatians 2:20, “It is not I who live but Christ who lives in me.

- Through Grace and Baptism the life of Christ dwells in our soul?

We are the Mystical Body of Christ - The continuation of the Incarnation.

- Mary is our Mother in the order of grace.
- Mary’s maternal role continues in the lives of the faithful.

Revelation 12:17

Even though she has been taken up into heaven, Mary continues to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to bring Christ to our soul and to form us in His likeness.

What does Mary do for me? The same thing she did for Jesus.

In cooperation with the Holy Spirit she

- Gave birth to him
 - Loved him
 - Cared for his every need
 - Taught him
 - Consoled him
 - Guided him
 - Protected him
-
- What Mary did for Jesus she continues to do for me because the life of Jesus continues in me

Think of what a mother does for any child:

- A mother cooperates in the Birth and development, education and formation of a child
- Motherhood in the order of grace preserves the analogy with that of nature.
- Mary cooperates with a mother's love in the action of the Holy Spirit that we may be formed in the image of Jesus Christ.
- See RM 45

What do we need to do?

- We are called to live in perfect imitation of Christ.
 - Imitate Christ – from the very beginning of His earthly life.
 - Right now, are we more like the mature full-grown Christ or the infant Christ?

At what stage should we begin to imitate Him? Teaching? Miracles?

- Entrust or consecrate oneself entirely into her hands – into her maternal care, in imitation of Christ

Entrustment is a response specifically to the love of a mother (RM 45)

Live in imitation of Jesus' relationship with Mary as He was a little child growing to maturity under her care and protection.

- Live in union with Mary just as Jesus Did!
- Live in filial dependence upon Mary - a lived relationship with Mary
- Live in constant conversation with her.
 - Words of JP II on the Anniversary of Assassination attempt
- Her role is to help us know and do His will.
 - Cana

Vat II decree on the Apostolate of lay people, "Everyone should have a genuine devotion to her and *entrust his life* to her motherly care." 4

2677 Entrust everything to Mary

- Her role is to help us to **know** and **do** His will.

Do we have to go to Mary to get to God?

1. **Don't think in a linear or spatial manner.**
Mary is not a bridge between us and Christ, **Get Rid of that Image!**
2. **She is there to help unite us to her Son, not to keep us away from Him.**

Example of an icon

1. Mary is extending Christ to us
2. or is that child in her hands us and she is leading us to Christ?
3. It is both.

Jesus is the Way, Mary "shows the way". She is the Hodigitria, She is "the sign" of the way.

3. Getting small children somewhere on time

I am the father and I make my will known to my children every morning: Put your shoes on, brush your teeth, put your coat on, get your books and get in the van. What do the children do? Become distracted, fight, go off and play... The Father's will is not done.

If my wife try's to help they say, "I can do it all by myself. "

But they don't. What if they let their mother help? The Father's will would be done more perfectly and efficiently

1. Entrust oneself to Mary in imitation of Christ
2. Live in imitation of his relationship with her
3. Pray the Rosary

How do we explain the fact that we pray to her?

1. God's mutable and immutable will
2. God wishes to associate the saints in his work
3. When we pray are we trying to change God or ourselves?
4. When I pray to Mary does she then go to God and get him to see things my way?
5. Rather, the problem is my difficulty to know and to do the will of Christ.
6. Recognizing my difficulty I entrust myself and my needs to Mary; she disposes me to know and to do the will of her son better.
7. Thus we see that praying to Mary is seeking her maternal influence upon me so that I may know and do the will of God in a greater way.
8. Mary carries out this maternal influence by the power of the Holy Spirit.