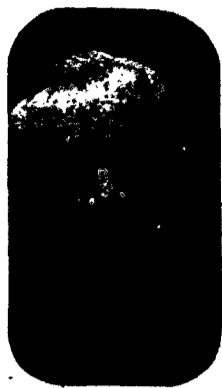


American Devotion to Mary

PART III

The II Vatican Council reminds us how much we can learn about our Lady from the Scriptures, thanks to modern scholarship.



It is always a question of reading the Scriptures under the guidance of the Church, of course, but here the Church in council has given us the lead. The practice of taking the first reading at Sunday Mass from the Old Testament, and then choosing a Gospel that shows the same theme fulfilled in Christ, is making our people more aware of the bonds between the Old Testament and the New.

We now have a rich liturgy in praise of Mary. And often enough we do little more than scratch the surface of these riches that we already possess, even while we are lamenting the passing of forms of devotion that in some cases, at least, were already moribund. The better grasp of the Scriptural portrait of Mary and a deeper sensitivity to the liturgy go together and reinforce one another. And from this twofold source we can hope for a revitalized devotion to our Lady that will fulfill the conciliar recommendation that all such devotions follow the lead of the liturgy.

To understand that Mary is "the exalted daughter of Zion in whom the times are fulfilled after the long waiting for the promise," one should read St. Luke's narrative from the Annunciation which shows the influence of the daughter of Zion and other Old Testament concepts. The chosen people, Israel, reached the end of its preparation in Mary. Mary, in a certain manner, incorporates the whole people, embodies them in herself. She is, in a word, Israel awaiting the Messiah, accepting the Messiah when He comes.

She was a "daughter of Zion," but her faith has made her also the Mother of the new Israel. And her leap of faith is to be found in her words of maternal consent to the angel of the Annunciation. In St. Luke's

The Slot Man

Times Describes Pro-Life Punch

In a special article in the New York Times Sunday Magazine of Aug. 20 writer Fred C. Shapiro terms the state Right to Life movement "one of the toughest political monoliths ever to demonstrate to the New York Legislature the essential accountability of the democratic process."

The article, entitled "Right to Life has a message for New York State legislators," declares that the state anti-abortionist movement "had done the unprecedented when it turned the Legislature around in only two years breaking down a proabortion

account, Mary's faith is subtly compared to Abraham's. For the closing part of Gabriel's message is the great word of Yahweh to Abraham at the time of the promise of the conception and birth of Isaac: "Nothing is impossible to God."

The Motherhood of Mary

Another theme to be considered is the spiritual motherhood of Mary. Most Catholics have heard the familiar explanation that Mary is spiritually the Mother of the members of Christ because she is the Mother of Christ, head of His body. The council goes a step further. It faces up to some of the so-called difficult sayings from our Lord's public life. For example, a woman said: "Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked." But He replied: "Still happier those who hear the Word of God and keep it." The council, following St. Augustine, calls attention to the great faith of Mary, which made her Mother of the members of Christ more than any other follower of Jesus, for in the strength of her faith and by her example the Mother of Jesus brings Him to birth in others.

"In the course of His preaching" as the council says: "She made her own the words in which her Son raised the kingdom beyond the considerations and bonds of flesh and blood by proclaiming blessed those who heard the Word of God and kept it, just as she herself was doing so faithfully."

This is the way in which the Church today proposes Mary to us as the one to be imitated. We are called to be like the great New Testament woman of faith in our own following of Christ, imitating also in our apostolic work her maternal affection in order to bring Christ to birth in others.

Overdependence

Father Eamon R. Carroll, a Carmelite Father, believes that the chief drawback in the American Catholic attitude toward our Lady is an overdependence on apparitions and private revelations. This, he feels, prevented for many the growth of a deeper Scriptural devotion to our Lady. People nourished on an approach to our Lady that

has secret messages, hidden letters, apocalyptic threats, seem inclined to find the Biblical portrait of Mary somewhat less interesting or nourishing. Even when the Council's teaching is explained, it may still leave them cold.

The Council, standing in the Catholic tradition, could speak at such length of the meaning of Mother of Jesus without expatiating on private revelations, granting fully, of course, that these have a providential place in Christian life and Catholic piety.

Hopeful Signs

The renewed liturgy offers us a wealth of possibilities for renewing and deepening our Marian devotion. There is a wider variety of readings now open to us in the new lectionary. There are four Marian prefaces among the 76 in the new missal, and the prayers of many of Mary's feasts have been newly done or revised to make them more Biblical and more faithful to the thought of Vatican II.

As Father Herbert McCabe, the Dominican theologian, has said: "In the Virgin Israel, the Virgin Mary, the Bride of the Lamb, we have one of the most fundamental Scriptural images of grace — the fertility which is not of any human power but simply from God — and in this image we have the great type of the Church. In the Virgin Mary we believe we see fulfilled the life which Christ promises to those He loved; her Assumption into the new creation is the type and pledge of our union with His Resurrection and our real human life in the world to come."

And if there remains in America or anywhere in the world an aloofness toward our Lady, the world famous theologian, Karl Rahner, has recently offered this explanation: "I think so many Christians of today have made Christianity into an ideology, a vision of the mind, an abstraction. And abstractions do not need a mother."

But, Christ is a person — and He and we need His Mother.

By Carmen Viglucchi

Editorial

The Latest Olympic Game

The first impulse when reading about the latest Olympics dispute which led to the expulsion of Rhodesia is to see it as a moral victory. A country which practices apartheid as a national policy has no place amid the fun and games of the world's family.

However, to avoid rash judgments, a look at the background of the dispute is in order. Rhodesia, which declared its independence from Britain in 1965, was admitted to the games a year ago with the stipulation that its athletes compete as British subjects and use the British hymn and flag.

This was done with the hope that the Rhodesians would see it as the affront it was and refuse to join the Olympics. Africans thought this way and no trouble developed until, lo and behold, there were the Rhodesians at Munich with ID

cards saying, "South Rhodesia, British subject."

Quicker than you could say Kenya, blacks from Africa and other countries, including the United States, threatened a boycott of the games. It worked and Rhodesia, which included eight blacks on its 43 man squad, was kicked out because they didn't understand certain Olympic games well enough to have British passports.

At this point, Avery Brundage, the retiring president of the International Olympic Committee who fought the battle to keep Rhodesia in despite the blacks' protest, decried the "blatant intrusion" of politics into the games, charging "political blackmail."

Brundage, who has a reputation as defender of purity and amateurism of the games, has nonetheless presided

over an IOC which allows the Russian teams, for instance, which are amateur in name only, to compete and run professional circles around competitors in their specialties.

The Olympic ostrich has somehow survived such incredible happenings as matching Russian and Czechoslovakia, when the latter had been invaded by Moscow tanks and troops. National feelings almost brought the Olympic house down — literally.

So the inevitable has come to pass, the IOC, which has accepted astigmatism as a way of life, has had its eyes opened. Even those who frolic on Mount Olympus must be aware of the world's faults and get involved.

So, on second thought that first impulse is correct. A nation which espouses apartheid must bear the consequences, even in the sphere of fun and games.