

Columnists

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—Alida Hagerty

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**Mary: Mediatrix of all graces**

By Father Albert Shamon  
Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 22:34-40; (R1) Exodus 22:20-26; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10.

In the major seminary, my first debate was about Mary as mediatrix of all graces. For some, to speak so of Mary is like waving a red flag. Immediately they'll quote St. Paul: "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 Timothy 2:5-6).

Of course, Mary's mediation in no way challenges Christ's role. Rather, hers depends on His, as the moon derives its light from the sun (#38).

A short while ago, I gave the wife of a dying man a rosary leaflet and asked her to pray the rosary daily for her husband. She was so glad to receive this, but whispered, "You know our priest doesn't believe in this. He says there is only one mediator between God and men?"

While driving home, I thought about this objection — always brought up to denigrate devotion to Mary. I wanted an answer. Then, like an inspiration from God, an answer came.

I began thinking of my family. We were eight kids. Papa was the sole breadwinner, and mama stayed at home — she had to with eight of us. Papa was the sole mediator of our finances.

We kids found it hard to go to papa for money. It was easy to say no, and nine times out of 10, that was the answer we got. We soon learned to go to Mama when we wanted money. She'd get it from him for us.

Sometimes we'd ask her, "Why is he so stingy?" She'd take his side and bawl us out. She loved him and would have it no other way but that we also would love him.

So, in her gentle, sweet, motherly way, she'd talk to us and tell us why papa had to be careful about money, how many bills he had to meet, how much he loved us. That was why he worked so hard and was so often away from the home, the wife and the kids he so dearly loved. Little by little, she made us understand.

Mary's mediatorial role is much the same. Christ Jesus is the sole mediator, but to get to the fruit of her womb, He wants us to go to

the tree. Two misconceptions, however, we must guard against. The first is to see Mary as a bridge between us and a remote Jesus. The Incarnation means Jesus has become one of us. He is never far from us. He is Emmanuel, God with us, in the Blessed Sacrament.

**A Word for Sunday**

Mary's mediatorial role, therefore, is not to bring Jesus to us, but rather, to bring us to Jesus! Just as we kids at first had wrong notions about Papa, so we often have wrong ideas about Jesus. At the wedding feast at Cana, only Mary really knew who Jesus was. But when she finished there, both the servants and the disciples knew Jesus.

A second misconception to guard against is to look upon Mary as an appeaser — as one who wipes away the frown from the face of her Son and His anger against us.

There is no need for this, for Jesus is a changeless friend; He loves us always. Mary's role again is to change us, not Him. As at Cana, she tries to get us to go to Him, to get to know Him as she does, and to love Him as she does. That is all!

She is His mother. She knows and loves Him, but she is our mother too — and so she cares for us and ardently desires that we come to know and love Him as she does.

And so the Holy Father, speaking of her mediatorial role, refers neither to Mary as bridge nor appeaser, but as "presence" — a mother's role in the family. Faith and presence, as I have said, are the key words of the encyclical.

Fittingly, therefore, the Holy Father concludes *Redemptoris Mater* with the Church's prayer: *Alma Redemptoris Mater* — "Loving Mother of the Redeemer, assist your people!"

**A deadly plot against Daniel**

By Cindy Bassett  
Darius, the new king of Babylon, appointed three presidents to assist him in overseeing the governance of the kingdom. One of the presidents was Daniel, the Hebrew prophet who had predicted the downfall of King Belshazzar.

Soon Daniel's wise counsel caused King Darius to rely more heavily upon him than on his counterparts. The more the king favored Daniel, the greater became the envy in the hearts of the other two presidents. When they could no longer contain their jealousy, the two men secretly to discuss their problem. After some discussion, they hatched a plan to trap the king into getting rid of Daniel — forever.

The very next day, the two presidents went to see the king. "We are pleased to report that all goes well in the land since you have been king," one of them began. "Talk to any citizen and he will tell you that he feels secure and happy under King Darius," the other man quickly added.

"It is good to hear these things," the king said, smiling with pleasure.

"So it is only fitting that your closest advisers have developed a way for your subjects to honor you," the first man continued. "All our plan needs is your signature, and it will become the law of the land!"

"Tell me of your idea," the king commanded. "We have written a law that is to be in effect for 30 days," the first explained. "During this time, it will be forbidden for anyone to ask a favor of either god or man. Instead, all petitions must be submitted to the king."

"In this way," the other president added, "your sovereign rule in decisions will be honored!"

King Darius was a proud man, and the two presidents had flattered him immensely. He gave their idea little thought, signing it into law immediately. Unknowingly, he had set the plot against Daniel in motion.

Soon the evidence against Daniel had been gathered. Although he about the new law, the prophet had continued to pray to the Lord three times a day.

One day, the two presidents rushed in to see the king. "The charge against Daniel is treason!" they shouted. "We have sworn testimony from witnesses who saw Daniel break the

law? King Darius realized that he had been tricked and dismissed the two presidents. But they would not be put off in their demand for justice. They returned later that same day, saying, "Your Majesty, we must insist that Daniel's crime be dealt with immediately. You, after all,

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signed the law yourself. It would not set a good precedent if Daniel went unpunished."

So at last, King Darius agreed. In those days, severe crimes brought harsh and swift punishments. Criminals were thrown into the lions' den, and justice was served in the jaws of the ferocious beasts.

King Darius himself sealed the stone that would prevent Daniel from escaping. Before he left the edge of the pit, the king called to Daniel, "I'm sorry, my friend. May your God, to whom you have shown the utmost loyalty, save you!"

That night, the king was so upset that he could not sleep. At dawn, he went back to the lions' pit and called down to Daniel: "Has your God saved you?"

"Yes, King Darius," Daniel replied. "I am innocent, and no harm has come to me. Last night the Lord sent his own angel to protect me."

King Darius issued a decree that day and sent messengers to read it throughout the kingdom. It stated: "Greetings! I decree that everyone shall tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For his God is the living, unchanging God whose kingdom shall never be destroyed and whose power shall never end. He delivers His people, preserving them from harm; He does great miracles in heaven and on earth. It is He who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions!"

Every citizen in the kingdom heard the news, except for the king's two former presidents. They were last seen entering the lions' den.

Scripture Reference: Daniel 6.

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