

Readers reply to critique of 'idolatrous' story

Church settled issue in 432 A.D

To the editors:

The letter of Elizabeth Rivkin (July 26 *Courier*: "Idolatrous" article on Mary was offensive, reader says") deserves a response. Ms. Rivkin is obviously ignorant of the Scriptures and the entire Catholic theological tradition, Eastern and Western.

The concept of "Mary, Mother of God" is not only correct but essential to the Faith. Ms. Rivkin may wish to make hers the prophetic words of Elizabeth who proclaimed Mary to be "the Mother of the Lord" (Luke 1:43), Who, according to St. Paul was "God's Son, born of a woman" (Galatians 4:5). The word for Lord in the Gospel is *Kyrios*, used for God in the Greek version of the Old Testament from which Luke depends. Jesus is the Word made (Mary's) flesh (John 1:14) and God Himself (John 1:1, Philippians 7:6-11). This same Jesus, born of Mary, is identical with the Yahweh of the Old Testament (John 8:58, compared with Exodus 3:14; note that Yahweh means "I am"). Jesus was persecuted by those who perceived — quite correctly — that He claimed to be God (John 10:33).

Jesus was not "God with a human body provided by Mary" as Ms. Rivkin seems to believe, but the Son of God Who assumed a human nature (i.e., body and soul, human feelings, intelligence and will) without ceasing to be God. In Jesus there are two natures (human and divine) in one person (that of the Son of God), so that He, while one with the Father (John 10:30) is also Mary's son (Luke 2:7). These are the teachings of the Councils of Nicea, Ephesus and Chalcedon, which reflected accurately Revelation as it was given to the Church in the Scriptures and the Tradition. All that Jesus was in His human nature (God's human nature) came from His Mother, for He had no earthly father. Unless Ms. Rivkin wishes to split Jesus into two persons, that of God the Son and another human person of whom we know nothing, she must grant that Mary did give birth to God and that She is the Mother of God.

The question Ms. Rivkin poses was faced by the Church more than fifteen centuries ago when we, under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) declared against the heretic Nestorius that there is only one person (that of the Son of God) in Jesus and that therefore the holy Virgin can be called Mother of God ...

... Our devotion to the Mother of God is not idolatry, going back to the Early Church. The Rosary is an integral part of the spirituality of the West. In the East, the Acahst witnesses to the insatiable need of believers to render honor to Her through Whom they received the Source of all blessings. The notion that a personal devotion to Mary is absolutely necessary is commonplace among the teachings of the



Wednesday, Aug. 15, was the feast of the Assumption. This mosaic of the Assumption can be seen at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C.

popes. It can be stated with certainty that such a devotion is an essential part of our spiritual development, which requires it or will lack authenticity. While we do not worship Mary (for she is a creature), as Mother of God She is offered a form of devotion qualitatively superior to that of the saints. Her supernatural perfection is second only to God's.

I am afraid that one cannot remain a Catholic and share the outlook and views of Ms. Rivkin, for she denies fundamental truths of the Faith, not only those pertaining to Mary — which would be bad enough — but some that pertain to Jesus. I cannot

Asks writer to humbly study religion in detail

To the editor:

Re: the July 26, 1990, article "Idolatrous" article on Mary was offensive" according to Elizabeth T. Rivkin of Geneva, please allow me to throw some light on the subject.

Mary is not the Mother of God the Father; Mary is not the Mother of God the Holy Spirit. Mary is the Mother of God the Son, i.e., she is the Mother of Jesus, the Man who is God the Son. Jesus the Man is hypostatically united to God the Son, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, hence we call Mary the Mother of God and since the Three Persons of the Most Holy

Trinity are but one God, there is no other way around calling Mary the Mother of God. Incidentally, we do not worship Mary as God. We pay to God the worship of *Latria*, we pay to the Saints the worship of *Dulia*, and we pay to Mary the worship of *Hyperdulia*.

If this does not make sense to Elizabeth, I ask her in all sincerity and humility to study her Catholic religion in greater detail.

Rev. Enrique T. Rueda
St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Church
Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

Dissenters lack logic

To the editor:

This letter is in response to a complaint about an "idolatrous" article on the mother of God.

If we accept that Jesus was and is God — I do — then isn't it reasonable to believe and declare that the woman He chose for His mother was and is mother of God?

That is a deep theological consideration and mystery. I am content it should be so. I can understand the difficulty for someone who does not accept the teaching authority of the church. What I fail to understand is the logic, lack of it, I should think, of those who cannot or will not allow the Church her authority, yet who refuse to relinquish their claim to membership. ...

Velma Hart Nicholson
Clarendon, N.Y.

Writer objected to 'straw man'

To the editor:

May I respond to Elizabeth Rivkin's letter in as frank and direct a manner as she, but I hope in a fair manner. She raises familiar false objections to Roman Christianity's faith and piety. I say false objections because as it so often happens it is a straw man that is raised and falsely called "Catholic" and then burned.

The errors proffered to burn are figments of non-Catholic thinking, not Catholicism. Nowhere is it, except in the utterances of anti-Catholics, that the Church ever proposed that Mary is the mother of God the Father or God the Holy Spirit. This "deduction" is a forced gross misrepresentation of Catholic teaching.

In Catholic piety the Holy Spirit was at times referred to as "Spouse" of Mary, not child. Even though, as Ms. Rivkin states, God is indivisible, still God the Father is not God the Son. That heretical notion I sometimes encounter while talking with non-Catholics about their reading of scriptural prophetic expectations. Mary is truly, fully and in every way Mother of God in His Sonship. ...

This sounds like more of humanity's attempts to keep God centered in the self alone. This flies in the face of the Hebrew covenant where God "lowers" Himself to bond with His new people. Later God humbles Himself opening Himself to us through a mother — with its stark consequence.

All, that we might open and respond to him and each other. "Full gospel" acknowledges God's mindfully raising Mary to the dignity of Mother of God for God's own glory. For Christians, mothers and fathers never do create the spirit of their children. They precipitate them by procreating their bodies, but ensoulment is the realm of God.

Yet are we not parents of the spiritual persons of those bodies? The The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus of Nazareth was not a human being. He revealed Himself to be of Divine being. This second Person of the Trinity, the absolute reflection of the Father, is not the Father though one with Him. As a mother, Mary conceived God, she carried God, she gave God birth, she nurtured Him. And when the Time came she suffered for Him.

In the face of this it is an immense pity to read of the "rights of those who accord Mary no special role in their spiritual lives."

Gene Charles
Canandaigua

Couple finds devotion foreign to their beliefs

To the editor:

Concerning the letter from Elizabeth Rivkin about devotions to Mary: Although we never considered it as "idolatry," we find prayers or devotions to Mary and other saints foreign to our beliefs and a form of superstition.

While there is no question that Mary lived an exemplary life open to the will of the Father, she is not a fourth person of the Trinity.

When we asked why we should pray to Mary and/or the other saints, a priest once explained it this way: "If you wanted a job at a particular company, and the vice president was a friend of yours, wouldn't you ask him to put in a good word for you?" Well, our question is — why would you go to the vice president when you know the President even better? Why do so many of us pray to the saints when Jesus told us to pray to God (Matthew 6: 9-13)?

Thomas and Ruth Uschold
Spencerport

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