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*MARY AS ECCLESIAL PERSON:
THE KEY TO MODERNITY'S QUEST FOR PERSONHOOD*

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To Mary, my Mother and guide

In memory of Pope John Paul II, model of ecclesial person in Mary

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PREFACE

The idea for this paper emerged after completing a first year course in Ecclesiology for STL studies. During that year I had examined the subject of communion and the Church from such angles as its Trinitarian foundations; the Eucharist as its constituting force; the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation and the Church in relation to the Kingdom. During the same time I was also reading the book *Being and Communion* by John Zizioulas (London: DLT, 1985) and was fascinated by his understanding of Eucharist as the necessary constituent of *persons* – those who shared in God’s eternal life- as distinct from *individuals* who remained confined to the limits of biological identity. I had always been drawn to understand spirituality in terms of the Trinity - God dwelling in his creatures, conforming them to the image of his Son through his Holy Spirit. Reading the spirituality of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity ten years ago, was one of those moments which personally confirmed, that I (and all human beings) had been called to blessedness through communion with God encompassing prayer at its deepest and life at its fullest. I learned that contemplative prayer was the deepest and yet most basic calling for all Christians and that God’s spirit was active even in what appears to be the most random events of life.

At the end of last year I wanted to research the Marian profile of the Church and found that once I began reading the ecclesiology of communion, an anthropology was emerging in the person of Mary that was fundamentally that of the child of God with a Trinitarian spirituality, confirming in some way my own spirituality as I have been led to live it in the Church. I was enthused and driven by the desire to connect Mary as *being of communion* with the *Church as communion* and to find in that connection an understanding of the universal ecclesial call to fulfil the fullness of personhood in relation to Christ and others. Presenting the material as “an answer” to modernity’s quest for personhood, I attempted to fashion it in a way that acknowledges themes in modernity’s construction of personhood which are valuable but which perhaps have not been adequately developed within the modern context in a way that fulfils the quest for personhood. I write also from the experience of modern culture, understanding the restlessness of hearts seeking to find themselves apart from God and yet sincerely desiring to realise the best of their humanity (a sure sign that God is working). When I understood the Church as the universal sacrament of

salvation it opened for me a new understanding of how to present the truths of the Church as the fulfilment of human identity in a way that builds on the truths of what is best in humanity and in society. Modernity is suspicious of role models especially if they understand that their greatness is precisely realised through God's power acting in human weakness. At the same time however, by virtue of being human, all individuals are in need of role models and so while rejecting true models of greatness, contemporary man replaces them with superficial ones based on lifestyles that are fleeting and passing. In this light I wanted to present Mary, as a model of true human greatness who will remain. She is in fact more than a model, as one who wills to lead all human beings to share in Christ's life and fulfil their quest for identity. Through her mothering, which continues in the Church, humanity realises itself. As a woman in the Church I also wanted to research how women in particular share in Mary's identity. While not wanting to idealise women as more capable of relationally (as in Christ I believe that male and female identities are transformed and equally capable of personalisation), through connecting Mary as being-in-relation and relating this the Church's sacramentality, it has given me a new appreciation of a woman's privileged identity as ecclesial person representing through her very nature the life-giving properties of the Church in her personalising mission to the world.

For guiding me during the last two years and helping me to connect together these wonderful ecclesiological themes in a Marian light, I wish to acknowledge the support and inspiration of my supervisor Fr. Oliver Treanor, lecturer in Dogmatic Theology at St. Patrick's College Maynooth. He has been unfailing in encouragement and dedicated to helping me improve my expression of ideas. I also wish to acknowledge Frs. Vincent Twomey, Thomas Norris and Tom Corbett whose ideas and courses have also deepened my understanding of the Church as a communion, my identity within it and through it in society.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	<i>Centesimus Annus</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CL	<i>Christifidelis Laici</i>
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i>
DeV	<i>Dominum et Vivificantem</i>
EE	<i>Ecclesia de Eucharistia</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
MD	<i>Mulieris Dignitatem</i>
RH	<i>Redemptoris Hominis</i>
RM	<i>Redemptoris Mater</i>
RMiss	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i>

INTRODUCTION

MARY AS ECCLESIAL PERSON: THE KEY TO MODERNITY'S QUEST FOR PERSONHOOD

In this thesis I propose to look at how Mary is the model of the human person defined as being-in-relation, made for communion. Modernity prioritises the values of freedom, independence and rationality, yet what it describes is less personhood than dualistic individuality. It has recognised relationality yet either doubts the essence of the other as “real” or has prioritised collectivity to such a degree that persons as unique entities have become lost. Modernity rejects Christianity as oppressive of freedom and human fulfilment, yet the values modernity seeks already exist in Christianity in the form of an authentic freedom found in relation to God and others.

Gaudium et Spes (22) presents Christ as the measure of the human person: “only in the mystery of the Word made flesh does the mystery of man truly become clear.” Christ’s identity in the immanent Trinity and the revelation of that identity in the economic sphere is rooted in his self-giving. Hence reflecting on immanent Trinitarian relations between persons who in their difference form a unity, reveals that communion is precisely the key to their unique personal identity.¹ The analogy between Trinitarian person and human person holds only if the finite creature is constituted in relationship to God, the infinite Other and Christ as the measure of man unlocks this analogy for finite creatures. Since he is the Eternal Son of the Father and the model of all relationship to him, creatures have now been inserted into his eternal Sonship by grace. Hence the Christian understanding of a person is in the image of Trinitarian person as one who *finds* uniqueness and individuality *as a being-in-relation*. This personal identity is found in relation to Christ and to others in the body through the Holy Spirit who forms a dynamic and free personal existence. Christianity hence exalts freedom and personal uniqueness constituted precisely through relationship with God in Christ and in community with others. In this thesis my argument will demonstrate that Mary as ecclesial person, one constituted in relationship to Christ and led by the Holy Spirit for the perfection of self-giving to the glory of the Father reveals this Trinitarian understanding of personhood and that she also is the key to modernity’s quest for personhood.

¹ The Christian understanding of personhood is a *being-in relation*, given through reflection on Trinitarian self-subsistent relations constituted in their mutual communion.

My second chapter will take key aspects of Mary as being-in-relation to God to begin this discovery of her as model of ecclesial person. Firstly, Mary is the model of the ecclesial person, because she is the sacrament of Christ.² As sacrament, she is both *sign* and *instrument* of human personhood. Hence Mary is *personalised* in Christ and acts as a *personalising force* in the world. Through God's choice of her and her flesh for the Incarnation of his Son, Mary is the *locus of all sacramentality* and in her form all creatures are now potentially receptive to God's grace, through the event of the Incarnation.

Secondly, Mary is *sign* of the *new creature*. She becomes sign through her *perfect response* to God's call, given through her sharing in Christ's yes. Her response is freely given and leads her into communion with God in faith. Of the many aspects to Mary as sign, the most significant are: (i) her virginal-motherhood, (ii) her being model of the redeemed, (iii) her being Bride in relation to Christ and hence revealing the *nuptial sign* of the body made for communion.

(i) In her *virginal-motherhood*, Mary represents sons and daughters of God, related to him not by nature as Christ is, but through grace as she is. As Mary is the first of the redeemed, revealed precisely because she is born without sin, redeemed sinners can associate with her as perfect model of the redeemed.

(ii) Her perfection as sign of a redeemed person does not take away from Christ but as the one "full of grace," fully points to Christ's role as sole Redeemer.

(iii) She is the *Spouse of Christ* in a way that is completely spiritual, signifying the new relationships of water and the Holy Spirit, which constitute the persons in the Church. Persons within the visible bonds of the Church can *analogously* experience her depths of spousal communion with Christ through the Eucharist.

As a *sacrament of Christ*, Mary is also God's *instrument*, since God has chosen her flesh in order to unite himself with the world and bring it to the fullness of its destiny. Through her communion with the person of the Holy Spirit, this

² Mary is the *sign* of Christ, bringing him to the world and *instrument*, bringing the world to Christ in him.

recapitulation is dynamically accomplished in God. Mary is thus the instrument of the Kingdom and shares that fullness of communion already while on earth.

- Mary's life also reveals the true meaning of freedom. While her being *expands* according to how her mission unfolds, the source of her freedom is her permanent essence in God. Through her union with the Holy Spirit, Mary's mission grows to fullness through her life in relation to Christ. Hence Mary manifests the essence of human personhood as a free being-in-relation to Christ and the Holy Spirit for the glory of God expressed through her very nature and her mission.

In the third chapter, I propose that human beings become persons in Mary's form inserted into Christ through the Church and her sacramental life, especially the Eucharist. In this form they find their essence, freedom and fulfilment - the key to their identity as persons. *Personhood* is found in the Church in Mary's form since:

- The Church is a collective "*person*" in the form of Mary as Virgin, Mother and Bride. Persons in the Church both male or female are also analogously in relation to Christ as "virgins", "brides" and "mothers," in the sense in which they apply to those in the Kingdom.³ The Church as Mother constitutes new creatures in Christ in the form of Mary through the sacraments, which I will refer to as their *personalisation*.
- Individuals become *persons* through their receptivity to God in a form that is feminine and receptive (sacramental). Through sharing the Eucharist, persons become *sacramental signs*, giving birth to Christ in their lives through self-giving, and also become *sacramental instruments* of the recapitulation of creation to God in Christ. They also become *spouses*, through their nuptial union with Christ particularly in the Eucharist. In the Church, the *objectivity* of human

³ While these categories are feminine, I will use them to apply to both women *and men* in the Church. It is the *form* of these titles, all of which suggest an identity *in relation to Christ*, which is important and not the fact that they apply to Mary specifically in her femaleness. The identities of Mary as Virgin, Mother and Spouse are not merely biological. Similarly these titles apply to persons in the Church not biologically, but spiritually in relation to Christ through the Spirit. Hence I suggest that male persons in the Church can also apply the essence of these Marian *identities* in their own relationship to Christ as *receptive* (virgin), *nuptial* (spouse) and *fruitful* (mother).

essence found in Christ is revealed in them, yet in a uniquely *subjective* way through the Holy Spirit who personalises them.

- This process of personalisation involves a paradoxical *de-privatisation* of individuals. Only through de-privatisation as insertion into (i) Christ, (ii) his mission, (iii) his Body, can they find freedom. Through insertion into Christ, individuals die to their own life of corruptibility and share in the power of Christ's resurrected life. They are also inserted into his mission of recapitulation and reconciliation of reality to God. Through their lives in the Body of Christ, they are no longer individuals but each lives out fully the meaning of *being-in-communion* through the Holy Spirit, who builds up the Body.
- The individual thus personalised becomes a sign to the world that *divinisation* (deepening communion in the life of God) is paradoxically also a *humanisation*, which constitutes the fulfilment of human nature and therefore builds up the world in accord with its nature. Personalised individuals are sacraments of Christ and this is revealed through the nuptial meaning of their bodies fulfilled in their reception of the Eucharist, which enables them *be-in-relation* to others. As sacraments they carry Christ into the midst of all human activities, which are hence transformed. When individuals are *personalised*, their beings are centred in Christ and all their actions are contemplative through the Spirit who can transform reality moving it to find its destiny in communion with God.
- Many individuals are united to Christ through their humanity and thus anonymously receive grace outside the *visible* bounds of the Church yet still *because* of the Church which is the very dwelling place of grace in creation. The sacraments especially the Eucharist, work efficaciously on their behalf through the deeds and intercessions of those in the visible bounds of Church, those who hear the word of God fruitfully and receive these sacraments (as it were) vicariously. The Eucharist fulfils the deepest need of all human beings for

personalisation which is union with God. All are searching for signs of this fulfilment but many will not look explicitly to the visible Church in their search. While they may not encounter what they consider to be the visible Church, nevertheless in the world they *do* encounter ecclesial persons who become signs to them of human persons fulfilled through their openness to the transcendent in the midst of created reality. Persons in the Church are hence sacraments of communion with God in the world and share in the Church's motherly work of *personalisation*.

Reflecting on Mary, the modern person finds the sign of personhood as a being made for communion with God and communion with others. Mary also reveals the *motherly* role of the Church⁴ who through the sacraments *personalises* human beings by bringing them into union with Christ in order to realise the nuptial meaning of their humanity. Hence human beings become persons in the feminine form of Mary's receptivity to God and his divine life. The world needs the feminine, liturgical, nuptial and sacramental life of the Church as the leaven in society, which personalises and brings individuals to communion. As I will show while this role takes on a feminine form, it is the task and ecclesial identity of *all* those in the Church both male and female.

Mary is hence the key to modernity's quest for personhood because she is both the sign and instrument of the ecclesial person as being made for communion - a being free, unique and fulfilled.

⁴ Preaching, teaching and instructing in the Word of God is also part of the Church's motherly role bringing Christ to birth in individuals.

CHAPTER I

THE DIGNITY OF MAN: CHRISTIANITY'S ANSWER TO MODERNITY'S QUEST

INTRODUCTION

Before presenting the Christian model of the human person, I will briefly outline modernity's quest for personhood based on individuality, uniqueness and freedom. From the beginnings of modernity, relations beyond the self with others and with God were seen as a threat to personal autonomy, based on the view that man only finds fulfilment through complete *independence*. Any acknowledgment of relationship to others existed merely for the protection of man's claim to autonomy.

While Christianity also upholds freedom as a key constituent of personhood, the freedom it subscribes to is found *only through communion* in contrast to modernity which sees freedom achieved only apart from others. The Christian understanding of freedom brings man *into communion* with self (in an integrated anthropology), with God (especially in Christ and through the Church), and with others. The qualities of freedom and uniqueness which modernity seeks are only to be found in a model of personhood revealed in self-giving. This objective model of the person is found in Christ and fulfilment of personhood is found *in relation to him*, as revealed in the life of Mary, the first ecclesial person. Hence through the Church individuals are *personalised* in Mary's form and find perfect fulfilment through the freedom gained in self-gift. Mary is both the revelation of *person* and the means of *personalisation*. The Church takes up this role as *sacrament*⁵ of personhood to the world.

1.0 HUMAN BEING'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY: TRUE PERSONHOOD

Humanity's quest for personhood began long before modernity. Ever since Greek times from Socrates to Aristotle, man sought to understand himself, his origins and destiny as well as the underlying nature of all reality.⁶ In the quest for personhood, the challenge for philosophers became how to integrate a permanent *essence (ousia)* with

⁵ In the second and third chapter I will take the word sacrament in its technical sense as both sign and instrument of divine life. The Church in Mary's form both reveals the person and is the instrument of personalisation.

⁶ Theories on what constituted the nature of reality varied from Thales who saw one underlying substance to reality, to Heraclitus who saw it as always in flux with no stable nature.

continually new human experiences. In Aristotle's thought there never was a doubt that man had a *permanent* nature, that he was also an *integrated* composite of body (*soma*) and mind (*nous*) and that his mind *could* engage with reality through his body's encounter with the world.

Outside of the Greek world, others also sought to understand human nature. The Hebrew understanding also saw man as a united composite of body and soul. God created man from material reality and formed him with his own breath.⁷ In Christian anthropology, man could actually share in the life of the transcendent God and yet had the freedom to work out his relationship through the Spirit in the midst of his creaturely existence. Hence both Hebrew and Christian thought had an integrated anthropology and a dynamic understanding of man's freedom perfectly co-existent with his unchanging essence, rooted in God.

1.1. Modernity's attempt to find man apart from God

Doubts concerning the constitution of man's nature only arose with the advent of modernity. The mind-body composite of human nature, which had prevailed, was torn asunder. Human beings in an exaggerated claim to freedom, attempted to see themselves as determinant of their own destinies apart from God. This anthropology came as a result of modernity's goal to disconnect the sacred and secular spheres⁸ and to throw off a God whom it felt was a hindrance to full human flourishing. Ironically in attempting to make human beings the measure of all things, modernity discovered man's finiteness and nothingness. Christian revelation by contrast asserted the dignity of man precisely *in his finiteness in relation to* an infinite God. Far from denying man's dignity therefore, Christian revelation affirmed it in the person of Christ, the model of freedom gained through self-gift, receptivity and love through an obedient relation to the Father.⁹

⁷ Gen 2:7.

⁸ The origins of this plan began in Humanism, continued through the Renaissance and ultimately the Enlightenment. Its aims were manifested most apparently during the French Revolution, which sought to dethrone God quite literally even from his own sacred sphere and to replace him, by the 'goddess of human reason.'

⁹ In denying God, man compromised his *essence*, his *human nature*, his freedom, his place in society, his ability to love, his hope and his will to be creative and to contribute to building a better world. In finding Christ, however, Man finds himself (GS 22), realising all of the above capabilities and more.

1.1.1. A dualist separation of body and soul

Starting with Descartes, modernity constructed a dualist anthropology. Life experienced through the body was seen as an unreliable indicator of reality. This led to an understanding that reality was merely the sum of perceived experiences but did not actually exist outside the mind.¹⁰ While the body of course had to be acknowledged, it had no connection with the mind but merely operated according to the physical laws of science.¹¹

This dualist separation of mind and body, prevailed right through modernity. While the mind was given priority, this was not due to a virtuous preoccupation with the life of the spirit.¹² Man's nature, *including his mind* was seen as purely *material*, operating merely according to physical laws with no relation to God. As dualism progressed, it gave rise to Marxism which saw the implementation of dualism as a social strategy. This had dire consequences for man and for society. Since all men were now to be treated as merely material beings, their lives were seen as dispensable and their supposed fulfilment only in relation to the material world and to others defined merely materially.¹³

1.1.2. Human nature constructed through arbitrary choices made

Due to modernity's claim that human nature is merely physical, human choices were correspondingly seen as based only on subjective criteria of feelings of pleasure and pain and not on any objective criteria of conscience.¹⁴ This later led to

¹⁰This understanding is evident in the work of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Locke said that while the power of memory gives an impression of a continuous identity that there exists no actual self-identity with an essence. See Stumpf, Samuel, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy* (New York: Mc Graw Hill, 1993), 285. Berkeley argued that substance is only an abstract idea and is merely a false inference drawn from observed qualities. Hume attempted to construct an objective human nature through what could be demonstrated and observed by the laws of science. *Ibid.*, 278.

¹¹ Descartes wanted to prove that man had access to reality only through his mind and that the body functioned merely through scientific laws which were incapable of mediating knowledge to the mind or soul. Descartes saw no interconnection between substances and hence no interdependency. Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, 246.

¹² In neo-platonic dualism, the body was seen as a hindrance to the life of the spirit.

¹³ Marxists saw persons as merely material beings defined purely in terms of their relations to the means of production. Marx was influenced by the Hegelian idea of man as pure spirit and all of creation moving in history towards the final consummation of spirit. However taking the opposite view to Hegel, Marx saw the world and man as purely material. By denying the idea of the transcendent, then material reality is all that exists and progress is only this-worldly. Socialism's aim became that of creating a utopia here on earth. Marxists took man's instinctual urge to better himself and his world and confined it to the material world. Marx, like Feuerbach thought of religion as merely the 'opium of the people', something which stopped people from working to change their life conditions in this present world.

¹⁴ Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, 271.

the extremes of Sartre's concept of "freedom," where in man's very desire for freedom apart from God (and objective conscience), he found himself "*condemned to be free*" with the *angst* that this freedom brought him. Adding to his anxiety was the realisation that his freedom was actually limited, based on the *limited* choices his will presented to him, which highlighted his own finiteness.¹⁵ Ironically this very angst when making "free" decisions seemed to point to the fact that there were "correct" and "incorrect" decisions to be made, thus pointing to the existence of a conscience. Sartre however did not see the measure of man in relation to any *objective* concept of human nature, but rather expressive of a subjective concept of man as he envisioned his best self to be.¹⁶ For anyone following this idea of a subjective human nature constructed through free choices, the idea of an objective human nature seemed to point to a denial of uniqueness and creative freedom. Those who exalted this arbitrary freedom offered no way out from the resultant existential anxiety. Hence man became enslaved by his very "freedom." In order to be *truly* free, man needs a transcendent but objective personal norm against whom to measure himself. This norm is the person of Christ. Yet modern man cannot not turn to Christ as he does not know him. He perceives Christianity as a static imposition of values rather than a sharing in the life of a person who himself is the fulfilment of personhood.

1.1.3. Human nature as absolutely independent

The effort to achieve absolute independence was not only made through attempting to "hide from God," but also through the goal of *freedom from* others.¹⁷

¹⁵Sartre saw that this awareness of human finitude gave rise to guilt, loneliness and despair. Heidegger also located human anxiety in the knowledge that men were finite, and one day would meet their own personal death. See Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre, A History of Philosophy*, 514.

¹⁶ As Kearney summarises, Sartre in his book, *The childhood of a leader* (1939) distinguishes between the sincere person and the authentic person. He sees the *sincere* person, (the word is derived from the latin *sine-cera*, meaning without veneer or make-up) as one who avoids the anguish and responsibility of choosing how to exist by accepting the natural law. Sartre looks down on this attitude. While he is called a phenomenologist, he slants Husserl's philosophy to prioritise existence over essence to the point of eroding the latter altogether. In contrast to the *sincere* self is Sartre's concept of the *authentic* self (from the latin *auto-hentes* meaning to make or create oneself). To be authentic demands that we "negate or transcend our "objective" essence in order to invent new roles to play, new personae to identify with, new masks to express our numerous projects of existence." See Kearney, *Modern movements in European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 54.

¹⁷ In Genesis, hiding from God was as a result of the shame caused when man realised that God knew he was disobediently trying to find being apart from his creator. Man attempted to "be like a God" knowing good and evil through effectively separating himself from God through disobedience. This false understanding of freedom meant the loss of selfhood.

Society was perceived as an unfortunate fact of life¹⁸ and its role merely to support the individual and his/her primacy as independent.¹⁹ Only autonomous human beings were seen as fulfilled and hence the corollary to this was that society and *others* were seen as a threat to self-identity.²⁰

Later socialists reclaimed the idea of man finding himself in relation to others. However their type of collectivity was not a *community*, which exalted uniqueness and difference as the foundation of true unity. Instead it became an oppressive tool of social conformity, where man lost his uniqueness, individuality and freedom. When Marxism collapsed, social commentators realised that community *is* important to man, and cannot be a mere collectivity which stifles his uniqueness and creativity. Rather it is precisely uniqueness and difference which *make* any community.²¹

1.1.4. Human nature as the “will to power”

An extreme understanding of human personhood emerged in modernity, defining persons according to *flawed* human nature. Nietzsche held that the basic constituent of man’s personhood was his “will to power” and an unapologetic pride over those less gifted than himself. Furthermore he believed that only the “supermen,” the gifted, had realised their personhood and that others who remained in their weak condition did so as part of their plot to overthrow the greatness of the superman and thus must be annihilated.²²

Although the consequences of flawed human nature abound in the world, in Christ man’s “new nature” is redeemed. The redeemed man is aware that pride and

¹⁸ This understanding was evident in the work of Hobbes and Locke who defined the self as the abstract individual who existed before and outside society. Jonathan Sachs, *The Politics of Hope* (London: Vintage, 2000), 81.

¹⁹ For Hobbes, the State’s role was merely to bring harmony to those situations where individuals left to themselves would devour each other. Rousseau saw man in his primal state as happy because he was independent. Paradoxically he argued for associations in society, but only because they helped man to preserve his overall radical disconnectedness. In these associations man “could unite himself with all, but still obey himself alone.” Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, 296.

²⁰ Rousseau sought to show that man as an isolated entity was *good* by nature and *society* caused man to become bad through the evils of pride and competitiveness as people sought to outdo each other. See *Ibid.*, 293.

²¹ When Marxism collapsed, many extolled the benefits of free market capitalism, if only because it gave man unbridled freedom, yet Capitalism in and of itself as man’s freedom to strive for material success is not enough unless it is accompanied by an understanding of man’s need to live in community and to share the wealth generated through man’s creativity.

²² Nietzsche’s theory could be analysed from the point of view of God’s unconditional love. The presence of weak people caused the “superman” anger and resentment. Hence he sought to destroy them, justifying his decision by claiming they were a threat to his greatness. This anger I would attribute to a subconscious rage at God’s unconditional love bestowing the same degree of love on the weak and the powerful alike and not according to human beings own standards of greatness.

sin is part of his 'old' or 'sinful' self. He also understands that any gifts he has which make him "stronger" than the weak have come from God and are completely undeserved. Hence no other person is a threat to the development of his talents but on the contrary he realises that his uniqueness is found only in relation to others. While man is free to exalt his unique personhood, he realises that this freedom is given to him *for* others and not at their expense. The unity of society is created precisely through persons acting in their unique individuality.²³

1.1.5. Human nature as the right to be different

As a reaction to Marxist collectivity and the loss of the individual, came the counter stress on uniqueness and difference. In attempting to protect against any type of conformity or ideological collectivity, a new type of society emerged exalting difference among people. This was post-modern society with the prevailing view that a plurality of different cultures, races and religions²⁴ pointed to the fact that one could no longer talk of *any common human nature*. This "melting pot" however was not a community of beings-in-relation to each other, but rather of beings who were preoccupied with their right to be different.²⁵ According to this understanding of "community," everyone had the right to live in splendid isolation and only chose to encounter others in order to assert that right. There was no attempt to harmonise the different voices and to form a type of unity in this difference.²⁶ In actual fact there could be no communion unless difference became the source and impetus for mutual sharing and self-giving.

Postmodernism's aim therefore was to *de-construct* all boundaries upholding pre-defined human nature. Any ideology or expression of objectivity was equated with an external imposition on man against his freedom. Those who subscribed to this philosophy aimed at achieving "freedom" through a denial of objectivity. Its deceit was camouflaged under the non-offensive (if even positively perceived) word of

²³ I will speak of this uniqueness in unity in a particular way in regard to the Church as communion in chapter 3.

²⁴ The choice not to believe was to be as accepted as one of those "religions."

²⁵ See Jonathan Sacks, "Paradoxes of Pluralism" in *The Persistence of Faith* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 59-81.

²⁶ Postmodernism's truth is that it *does* respect difference, that man's nature cannot be confined in a monist conformist understanding that all are identical. It could be said to have arisen from the loss of the sense of the personal both within capitalist and socialist society. Postmodernism gave a voice to those who were not in conformity with any mainstream definition of citizen or individual, however achieving rights were not based on whether their demands conformed to any objective notion of true human nature and this is its ultimate flaw.

‘tolerance.’ For postmodernists, tolerance was necessary to accept subjectivist “truths” as opposed to (what they labelled as) the harsh “judgmentalism” of those who claimed to know objective truth.²⁷

Hence for the most part, modern philosophy both rejected human nature as an objective essence and attempted to *reconstruct* it based on arbitrary criteria, in order to keep man “free” at all costs. Those attempts to construct a model of the free person apart from God failed, since they neglected vital constituents of freedom. In order to be free, one paradoxically needs to be (i) *in relation* to others (especially to a transcendent God), (ii) embodied and (iii) capable of freely choosing actions through measuring them against an objective criterion of human nature personalised in Christ.

1.2. Hope within philosophy: human nature as *person in relation*

While modern philosophy from Descartes saw man as a disembodied disconnected being, a new hope emerged through phenomenology, reiterating the truth that through his mind, man could encounter reality including the “other.”²⁸ Husserl, the father of this philosophical school, saw that the meaning of the human person could only be recovered when man reclaimed the life of experience.²⁹ However not all phenomenologists accepted that one could encounter reality through the apprehension of phenomena. While Husserl held that knowledge of self could be projected onto the “other” in order to “know” him, he still defined knowing as merely *apprehending* the other’s external form as he *presented* himself.³⁰ Levinas defined the

²⁷ Tolerance was based on ‘anything goes.’ One had to be tolerant as the premise of society was nothingness. Nothingness means that there is no right or wrong and hence every expression of being had a right to be heard, since ultimately it was just an expression of difference and difference is truth for post-modernists.

²⁸ Up to this point all relationships were seen as causes for conflict encroaching on one’s independence. For Hobbes, Sartre, Marx and Nietzsche, forming relationships with the other, meant somehow a loss of one’s own self, one’s independence and one’s freedom. For Nietzsche, relationships were always between those of the weak and the strong, and for Marx between the owners of the means of production and those without. The State in Hobbes understanding existed merely to prevent men from destroying each other but also in Rousseau’s understanding, to protect individuality and not to harmonise it in community

²⁹ Husserl sees that “the world is an experience which we *live* before it becomes an object which we know in some impersonal or detached fashion...In this manner the traditional category of substance is replaced by the category of relation,” See Kearney, Richard, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 13.

³⁰ “Phenomenology rests on the radical conviction that meaning is neither in the mind alone, nor in the world alone, but in the intentional relationship between the two. The object is not, as Hume and the empiricists maintained, a representation or faded impression inside my head.” See *Ibid.*, 15.

other precisely in his/her difference to the subject, existing outside and apart.³¹ *Relationships* one to the other were dependent on difference, where the other remained “infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign”³² and could be welcomed in his/her difference through *hospitality*.³³ True relationships to the other were fruitful in that it they did not entail a loss of self.³⁴ For some including Edith Stein, realising that one could encounter the other as a “phenomenon” led to a rediscovery of the truth (also held by Catholic philosophers) that behind “bodies” one encountered persons – individual human beings with a common nature.³⁵ Pope John Paul II’s anthropology (which was the foundation for all his moral teaching) was enlightened by the insights gained from his philosophical studies in phenomenology and yet raised to new heights through integrating them with the insights of Christian revelation.³⁶

³¹ “The other is defined not by his/her relationship to me, but as someone completely unique and transcendent, *outside* of me and *existing apart* from me.” Levinas sees that the other presents himself to me by speaking and the person is called on to respond to that claim. He sees the other also as represented in the face-the face is the “infinite or indeterminate element which breaks up the unity of my world.” See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: an essay on exteriority*. Translated by Alphonus Lingus (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), 194 in Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 348.

³² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: an essay on exteriority*, 194.

³³ Levinas sees subjectivity as a welcoming of the other in hospitality. In hospitality, the idea of infinity is consummated. The other is the one “who breaks up the unity of my world” and some relationships to the other give rise to a type of fruitfulness. He views the relationship between a child and a parent as the characteristic form of this fruitfulness. The child is different from the parent, is other-to him, and yet comes forth from him. The parent needs to relate to the child precisely in his otherness and because of difference and not by attempting to possess him. See *Totality and Infinity*, 27 and Moran, 338.

³⁴ Levinas speaks of fecundity as expressing a phenomenon in which the “I” can be related to the other without being either annihilated (in death) or completely absorbed by the other. Fecundity is a type of exteriority of self. He sees an example of this relationship as that between parent and child. This relationship is not reducible to ownership-having. In *Time and the Other and additional essays* (Pittsburgh: Dusquesne University, 1987), 91.

³⁵ This acceptance of Thomist realism emerged with her acceptance of the truths of Catholic Revelation.

³⁶ See Karol Wojtyla’s (Pope John Paul II), major work of philosophical anthropology which goes beyond phenomenology in that it accepts that actions are expressive of the person who is open to the transcendent other. *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 181. “The persons and the action constitute together an intimately cohesive, dynamic reality, in which the action is the manifestation and the explanation of the person and the action. This parallelism of manifestation and explanation is characteristic for the phenomenological method.”

“The shape of transcendence, is in concrete that of human existence: it is the shape of human life itself. Man as the person both lives and fulfils himself within the perspective of his transcendence.... [The] person’s surrender to truth in judging as well as in acting constitute the real and concrete fabric of the personal life of man. It is on them...that the entire phenomenological structure of self-governance and self-possession is based.” Wojtyla integrates traditional philosophical insights with those of phenomenology. He says, “it seems however that we have gone much further than traditional philosophy in its conception of man, inasmuch as in our analyses we have accumulated sufficient evidence of the spirituality of man in the descriptive phenomenological sense which also lead, even if only indirectly, to the ontological level.” *Ibid.*, 182.

“The integration of the person in the action, taking place in the body and expressed by it, reveals simultaneously the deepest sense of the integrity of man as a person. It is the soul, indeed the spiritual

Wojtyla used the phenomenological method to reveal the integral composition of the human being as body and soul; however as he noted, this method cannot discover any further details in the complexity of the person.³⁷ Nevertheless he saw that looking at the person in community can reveal that it is man's *transcendence* which preserves his freedom and direction within the social whole. Wojtyla notes that man's transcendent nature is the basis as well as the condition for participation which is essential for community yet preserves the "personalistic value" of man's own acting.³⁸

2.0. THE CONCEPT OF *PERSON* IN TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY: BEING-IN-RELATION

Phenomenology was led through reason to discover the same truth that Christianity had re-discovered of personhood through reflecting on the doctrine of the Trinity.³⁹ In early Christian theology the word person was used to describe the three in God.⁴⁰ The Cappadocian Fathers showed that '*persona*' in the Latin was the same as the Greek '*hypostasis*' meaning an individual substance and Augustine later accepted the term person, albeit grudgingly.⁴¹ Boethius defined a person as "an individual substance of a

soul that appears to be the ultimate principle of this integrity. The person is not to be identified solely with body as such." Ibid., 205.

³⁷ "Man appears in the field of our integral experience as somebody material, as corporeal, but at the same time, we know the personal unity of this material is somebody to be determined by the spirit, by his spiritual nature and spiritual life. The very fact that the personal – as well as the ontic – unity of the corporeal man is ultimately commanded by man's spiritual factor allows us to see in him the ontic composite of soul and body, of the spiritual and the material elements. The phenomenological insight does not reveal directly this complexity but only brings into prominence the unity of man as the person. We also know that it does not obscure the complexity, but on the contrary leads up to it." Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 185.

³⁸ Wojtyla sees that to be capable of participation indicates that man, when he acts together with other men, retains in this acting, the personalistic value of his own action and at the same time shares in the realisation and the results of communal acting. Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 269.

³⁹ In the immanent Trinitarian relations, the person of the Father is constituted as Father in his *relationship* to the Son, and the Son as Son in his *relationship* to the Father. In fact, each personal being consists in the fullness of their self-giving to the other. Their personhood is thus constituted by love, and the Holy Spirit is the third person –the personification of this self-giving.

⁴⁰ This led to a fear of modalism among the Latins. It seemed as though "three persons" meant there were not three individual entities in God but merely three modes of the same being.

⁴¹ Augustine realised that he had to use the term person, at risk of being silent on the three in God. St Augustine, in *De Trinitate*, 7, 4 writes, "When someone asks: what are these three (i.e. the Father, the Son and the Spirit), three what? We are hard to put to find a specific or a generic noun that will cover these three but none comes to mind, for the transcendence of the divinity exceeds the resources of our normal vocabulary...person is a generic term since it can also be applied to man, even though there is such a distance from man to God?"

"Why three persons, although we do not speak of three gods nor of three essences? Is it not because we wish to have a word which expresses in what sense we must conceive the Trinity and not remain absolutely silent when someone asks us what these three are, since three they are by our own admission." *De Trinitate*, 7,6, 11. In Bertrand De Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History* (Massachusetts: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 127.

rational nature.”⁴² Theology progressed to show that the three individual “substances” or persons in God existed precisely in their *relations* of communion with each other.⁴³

Persons in the Trinity are constituted not through a loose relationship or a type of welcoming the other as Levinas defined human personhood, but rather through a *participation* in the other. Man cannot conceive this type of participation within the Trinity. It is a *perichoretic* communion constituted when the Father completely *pours himself out* into the Son in love and the Son receives him because he simultaneously has poured himself out in self-giving to the Father.⁴⁴ Within this giving and receiving of personhood, there are no spaces or no delays. Giving is as spontaneous as receiving and to give is actually to receive. When this Trinitarian understanding of persons is applied to human persons, it is precisely in this giving to the other that one finds oneself, not by being absorbed into the other, but by loving him/her.⁴⁵ Communion at the heart of Trinitarian participation in the other is based on perpetual free self-giving in love. The closest human analogy to this form of communion is spousal self-giving in marriage.

Reflecting on the Trinity reveals that human persons are created to be in the image of Trinitarian persons,⁴⁶ and that they are defined *personally*⁴⁷ as beings-in-

⁴² See F. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy* (Mentheum and Co. London, 1972), 76 who points out that Boethius refers to Aristotelian metaphysical concepts in his books “Against Eutyches” and “On the Trinity.” He notes however that these were not taken up by the early medievals.

⁴³ See John O’ Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 101-102. Richard St. Victor understood the ‘three’ in God on the basis that God is love. Richard preserves Boethius’ understanding of substantiality (an individual substance) but complements it by the understanding of relationality. St Basil wanted to safeguard the distinct integral existence of each of the Trinitarian persons and spoke of the unity between them as communion. Aquinas highlights that the three persons of the Trinity are *subsistent* relations since each relation is identical with the divine essence.

⁴⁴ Within the Trinity, the person of the Son is presented to the Father as *other*, precisely because he is Son. It is his *difference* which first constitutes the Son’s subjectivity and yet this is only possible because of there being a relation. Difference presumes relationship in order to reveal the contrast between persons. Yet relationship is only possible because of the ability of one to recognise the other as different and in his difference to “welcome” the other into his realm. Yet in order to welcome the other, there must first be a space that is created in oneself.

⁴⁵ The use of the word “welcome,” conveys the respect that is due to the other in his difference and otherness. It guards against any threat of annihilation of the other in an attempt at possession or of conformity to the “I.”

⁴⁶ The Church has explicitly referred to the Trinity as the image of personhood for man. *Mulieris Dignitatem* refers to *Gaudium et Spes*, which says that “being a person can only be achieved through a sincere gift of self (GS 24). MD goes on to describe man as person-in-relation in the image of Trinitarian persons, “The model of this interpretation is God himself as Trinity, a communion of persons. To say that man is made in the image and likeness of God means that man is called to exist for others, to become a gift.” MD 7 “Being a person in the image and likeness of God involves existing in relationship, in relation to the other “I.”

⁴⁷ “Since God is the highest and determining reality, in God then, “being is personal, thus being as a whole is personally defined.” See Grabowski, “Person: Substance and Relation,” 159. “Persons

relation⁴⁸ made to love others freely thus constituting their own identity. Human persons exist to love⁴⁹ and as Gabriel Marcel writes, “within the fellowship of being that love creates and sustains, the person *is* most fully.”⁵⁰ Marcel speaks of becoming more personalised (more of a person) by receiving others.⁵¹ Hence human persons, in the image of the Trinitarian God find their identity in communion with God and others. While Marriage is the deepest form of *human* communion (including the deepest physical self-giving expressive of a life-long commitment to the other as spouse) as a sacrament, it actually points beyond itself to the fullness of spousal communion of persons *with God* which will only be realised at the Eschaton. This spousal communion of the person with God can already be tasted on this earth however through personal reception of the Eucharist within the Body of the Church which brings individuals into communion with each other.⁵² In the “in between” phase of life until Christ’s second coming the Church in the sacrament of the Eucharist both *makes present* and is the means towards this fullness of spousal communion between the human persons and God (the “not yet”).

2.1. Jesus: Personhood as self-giving revealed in the Trinity

Reflection on the Trinity reveals that human persons are made for mutual communion with each other. Pondering the mystery of Christ reveals the essence of communion as *relationship to the Father*. As the Vatican Council document *Gaudium et Spes* stressed, Christ reveals man to himself (GS 22),⁵³ meaning his nature, dignity

hypostasise being”, See Grabowski, “Person: Substance and relation,” *Communio*, 22 (1995): 162 and Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 29 and *The God of Jesus Christ*, (London: SCM Press, 1984), 156.

⁴⁸ Both Gunton and Zizioulas see that substances exist most fully within personal communion. See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1984), 55. “The perfect man is consequently is one who is authentically a person, that is, one who subsists, who possesses a “mode of existence” and is constituted as being in precisely the manner in which God also subsists as being.” See also Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, (London: T & T Clark, 1991), 9-11.

⁴⁹ See John O’ Malley, *An Essay on the Concept of Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 130

⁵⁰ John O’ Malley, *An Essay on the Concept of person in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, 130.

⁵¹ “The more my existence takes on the character of including others, the narrower the gap becomes which separates it from being; the more, in other words, I am”. Gabriel Marcel, *Le Mystère et l’Être*, II (Paris: Aubier, 1951), 35 in O’ Malley, *An Essay on the Concept of Person*, 129

⁵² I will elaborate on this in chapter three.

⁵³ Theologians have developed this concept in various ways. Bultmann starts with *man* who reveals God and sees that statements about human beings are at the same time statements about God, since God is the “all determining reality”. See Rudolf Bultmann, “Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?”, 26 in Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 3. However while Bultmann starts with anthropology to point to Christology, this is only possible because of the Incarnation so that man in his humanity can somehow point to the God who became man.

and destiny. The Incarnation of Christ reveals to man his dignity made for communion with God⁵⁴ and his “purpose and goal as humanisation through divinisation.”⁵⁵ This became the anthropological theme of the Second Vatican Council.⁵⁶ However it needs to be stressed in the light of Christology (Christ’s fully divine and fully human nature hypostatically united), that through being assimilated to Christ, man *grows* into the fullness of his humanity. This process of assimilation will later will be explained as occurring *through the Church*, especially the Eucharist. It is often mistakenly perceived that union with Christ brings about an over spiritualization of man or a stifling of his humanity and the same criticism is made of the Church. Contemporary persons *choose* instead to “be spiritual” and “form a relationship with God” apart from what they define as “the institutional Church.” They wrongly perceive the Church merely as a visible institution and forget that just as Christ’s humanity revealed his divinity, so too the Church’s visible structures reveal and make accessible her inner spiritual union with Christ her spouse (as she is the sacrament of Christ). Hence in order to experience this relationship or communion with Christ, there is no “way” accept through the Church, just as there is “no way” to God *except* through Christ. Christ’s relationship of communion with God his Father, revealed through his words and works especially on the cross,⁵⁷ is an expression of his self-giving and receiving within the immanent Trinity.⁵⁸ Man thus becomes personalised to the degree that through and in Christ he can give himself, receive another and relate to God freely as son.⁵⁹ Christ is more than a *model* of self-giving to God; he *enables*

⁵⁴ Walter Kasper, “The Theological Anthropology of Gaudium et Spes,” *Communio* 23 (Spring 1996): 129-140, 137.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Walter Kasper sees anthropology linked to Christology, through the concept of “the image of God” in the theological anthropology of the Second Vatican Council. See Walter Kasper, “The Theological Anthropology of Gaudium et Spes,” 129-140,

⁵⁷ See *Dei Verbum, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* (1965) in Austin Flannery, *Vatican II, Vol. 1: the Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1996) # 2.

⁵⁸ John Grabowski describes the mystery of the human person, created in the image of the triune God as a “being whose subsistence is relational.” See Grabowski, “Person: Substance and relation,” 140.

⁵⁹ See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 56. “Thanks to Christ, man can henceforth subsist, can affirm his existence as personal not on the basis of the immutable laws of nature, but on the basis of a relationship with God which is identified with what Christ in freedom and love possesses as Son of God with the Father.”

the human person to *enter into* his own self-gift as a response to the Father.⁶⁰ This assimilation to Christ does not destroy the self, but in fact constitutes it.⁶¹

Rooted in Christ, man experiences the tension between his “new nature” which points beyond the world and a merely biological understanding of his existence which tells him that there is no life beyond the material present experience of being in the world.⁶² A scientific biological understanding of the human being does not hold that the physical body can be opened to the transcendent and share in God’s life and be transformed by it. Thus left to himself in his material finite nature, man cannot experience a permanent communion with others through his body.⁶³ This however is precisely what human beings need to fulfil their natures.⁶⁴ Only the Christian view of the human being as a body-soul composite in the image of Christ can fulfil man in his very nature.

It is not only theological revelation, which points to this understanding of man’s fulfilment. As it developed through the centuries, philosophical thought came to this same understanding. Voegelin believes that philosophical reflection leads to the view the most complex view of man (or what he calls “differentiated view”) is when man’s existence is “open” (to God). He sees that the Christian view is the culmination and high point of the philosophical search for man as it represents this maximised differentiation. It describes the human being as a composite of body and soul. This is based on Aristotelian philosophy but is also revealed in Christ’s hypostatic union of divinity and humanity as a model for the analogous composition of soul and body in human beings. Hence, because of Christ and the Incarnation,

⁶⁰ The Christian reveals that one can only find oneself by ‘remaining in Christ’s love (Jn15). Only then can the Christian bear the fruit of life as communion and love.

⁶¹ For Rahner, ‘person’ is a spiritual being capable of receiving God’s self communication. “Man should be able to receive this love which is God himself, he must have a congeniality for it. He must be able to accept it (and hence grace, the beatific vision) as one who has room and scope, understanding and desire for it. Thus he must have a real potency for it. He must have it always.” See Karl Rahner, “Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace”, in *Theological Investigations*, vol 1 (London: Darton, Longmann and Todd, 1974), 311.

⁶² This merely biological understanding of person as limiting is found in both Zizioulas, *Being in Communion* and in Eric Voegelin. For Zizioulas, what makes man a person is to overcome the necessity of existence. See *Being as Communion*, 42. A mere material or biological understanding of man confines him to this world and man needs to break out of these confines in order to be personalised. See M. Hogan’s comments on Eric Voegelin’s anthropology in *The Biblical Vision of the Human Person*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994), 256.

⁶³ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 53. “The tragedy of the biological construction of man’s hypostasis does not lie in his not being a person because of it; it lies in his tending towards being a person through it and failing.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 51. “Man is always straining to realise this unity at the level of personhood, but the two come apart and are again separate individuals. While spouses can transcend themselves in the bodily and personal act of sexual self-giving, even that is only temporary.”

man's body is now formed and shaped by the resurrected life in which he already shares and thus becomes a means to express himself and his personhood.⁶⁵

Participating in the eternal life of the Son of God also means that the human being now shares in Christ's ontological freedom,⁶⁶ and in him thus overcomes sin, death⁶⁷ and human finiteness to fulfil the essence of a being-in-relation.⁶⁸ Now every one of this new creature's actions are transformed. Hence, every *act* of loving others is not a merely a physical act but a spiritual one bringing about deeper communion with God.⁶⁹ Thus while the nuptial meaning of the body reveals that human beings are made for communion with each other, ultimately even the deepest human communion in marriage is a sign which points to the communion of both spouses with *God*.⁷⁰

The scriptural understanding of "finding one's life by losing it," relates to this idea of participation in Christ and his life. While losing oneself means surrender of the self through assimilation to Christ, which only happens through the Church, it also means surrender of the self *for others*. This is the antithesis of the contemporary understanding of self-development of oneself often at the expense of others. At this point the Christian understanding of personhood goes beyond the philosophical understanding.

The contemporary world fears a loss of self-identity above anything else and yet what it is clinging to are false constructions of self rooted in (as we have said) false conceptions of freedom and autonomy. By contrast the model of personhood revealed in Christ is paradoxical. It recognises that by himself, man has constructed false self-identities. Hence it is only by "losing self" that one can find it and by laying

⁶⁵ Wojtyla calls self-possession-the ability of man due to his acting according to truth to express his personhood through his body. See Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 205.

⁶⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 43. The authentic person, as absolute ontological freedom, must be 'uncreated', that is unbounded by any necessity, including its own existence. Zizioulas goes so far as to say that if God does not exist, the person does not exist. God's freedom and life is the essence of God's nature as love. *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 49. Death is the opposite of God's life, where the person ceases to love and be loved, to be unique and unrepeatable.

⁶⁸ "Through freely willing communion with his Son, God the Father's personhood as Father is constituted. The Ground of God's ontological freedom thus lies not in God's nature, but in God's personal existence. It is this which gives human beings the hope of becoming authentic persons." *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁹ "While no activity of the existing human person is disembodied there is no such activity which is not at the same time in some sense spiritual. This spiritual reality is, furthermore, the central reality of the person, most strongly present in love." See O' Malley, *An Essay on the Concept of Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, 128.

⁷⁰ This relationship of man and God has already begun now since in Christ and through the Church, man has triumphed over death and mortality and the body can already reveal that as its nuptial meaning. See Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 63

down one's life that one can take it up. Losing oneself means serving others, welcoming strangers, loving sinners and strangers and in doing so overcoming the false self which seeks to preserve autonomy. Encountering others entails a fear that one will be dis-possessed of self as others make claims to one's service of them. Yet it is only in allowing these claims to be made and attempting to respond that one finds the ability to love which uniquely defines a human being as a person. Of all other creatures only human beings are created in the image of God and hence only human beings are called to self-giving love and communion with others.

2.2. Person as *being-in-the Church*

The call to become self-fulfilled and fully actualised as human is hence the call to personalisation through self-giving to others. As we have described, the personalisation or divinisation⁷¹ of individuals begins *even now* through opening to Christ⁷² and in assimilation to him through sharing in his eternal life in the Church especially through the sacraments.⁷³ Therefore the Church is the way that persons are incorporated into Christ⁷⁴ and their identity fulfilled.⁷⁵ By Baptism, the Christian is born again, in a way that he is no longer determined solely by his biological nature.⁷⁶ The *ecclesial* person now participates God's divine life, hopes in his immortality,⁷⁷ and his identity is linked with the final outcome of his existence.⁷⁸ Zizioulas refers to

⁷¹ Personalisation is the same concept as divinisation as described by the Church Fathers. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 49.

⁷² "By opening ourselves towards Christ, we are being drawn by the divine reality that has taken humanity to itself in the person of Christ himself." See Hogan, *The Biblical Vision of the Human Person*, 254.

⁷³ For Voegelin man must keep open to the "ordering tension of existence" which leads beyond the world through faith, which leads into love. He sees that the truth of history and its order is constituted in Jesus Christ. He describes this as an open existence. This open existence is also called, an "existence in truth", which is the concrete person's recognition of his own finitude and creatureliness and his discovery within it "of an orientation towards supreme truth." Hogan writes that the human person can do this through participating in God through faith and that this faith is then brought to completion in love. See Hogan, *The Biblical Vision of the Human Person*, 257.

⁷⁴ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57. Zizioulas describes this movement in and through the Church as the movement from biological hypostasis to ecclesial hypostasis

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* "As an ecclesial hypostasis, man proves that what is valid for God can also be valid for man; the nature does not determine the person; the person enables nature to exist; freedom is identified with the being of man."

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁸ Hogan points out that the Christian realises that he has a greater capacity for the acceptance of his life in the in-between state since even now creation is good, transformed and shares in eschatological fullness. Voegelin sees that "*In the process of history then, man's nature becomes luminous for its eschatological destiny.*" Hogan, M, *The Biblical Vision of the Human Person*, 256. See also Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 59. Orthodox theology focuses on the Eucharist as the bread of immortality.

the ecclesial person as “a sacramental or eucharistic hypostasis.”⁷⁹ Hence through sharing in the Eucharist, the person in the Church is liberated from individualism and egocentricity and can love in a way that transcends exclusive biological and family ties. In fact through loving even one other person, the ecclesial person loves all of humankind through that one.⁸⁰

As the sacrament of communion, the Eucharist is not only the *sign* of the fullness of communion of the Kingdom, but is also the *means* by which it is brought about, since in and through every Mass, all creatures and creation are offered to God through Christ who is reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5). Hence, at every Eucharist the bonds of communion are being strengthened not only in the Body of Christ, but also within humankind itself moving towards full communion with God in the Kingdom.

3.0. CONCLUSION

Modern philosophical anthropology sees human persons as entirely disconnected from God and from objective conscience, striving through their own will and choices to recreate themselves by following basic drives to power and superiority. The image of man is individualistic and independent, without any need for community.

What is lacking is a complete understanding of man as a being-in-himself and as a being-in-relation. Contemporary philosophy through phenomenology has reached the truth that one can learn something of the human being’s inner nature through encountering them as external phenomenon. Edith Stein probed human nature through the notion of *empathy* but only later through discovering St Thomas and Aristotle came to an understanding of the human being as the integrated composite of body and soul. Hence she understood that the human body expresses the person. While philosophy’s insights merely conclude that a person exists and that relationships to others are *somewhat* important, Christian anthropology can penetrate from the external reality of the person to the *meaning* of the person informed by their inner nature who is free precisely through this sharing in the transcendent life and sharing it with other persons. Christian Revelation presents the reason for the person’s inner

Through the Eucharist emphasises man overcomes the tendency of his biological nature towards corruptibility and shares now in eschatological fullness.

This process of transformation or transfiguration of man in the world, does not remove him from the world but through him brings the world to God.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.,63.

nature (pointing towards their goal of communion with God) and how this is expressed through the body in relation to others.⁸¹ Christ's identity is one of mutual communion with the Father. While human persons are created for communion in the image of Trinitarian persons, they can only live this identity in Christ. As we have shown, Christ reveals man to himself, and is the way for man to find fulfilment through full personalisation, a process of love and self-giving to the Father and to one's neighbour including strangers and enemies. By sharing in Christ's divinity they complete their humanity since Christ entered it in order to raise it up to fulfilment.

This happens only through the Church. So the question remains how can we describe the revelation of this person living in Christ through the Church. The following chapter replies that Mary is that *personalised human being* in the Church, since the Church takes on her very form. As will be explained, Ecclesial persons find their identity in Christ only because Mary found hers in him as virgin, mother and bride.

⁸¹ Ibid., 43. Zizioulas writes that "philosophy can arrive at the confirmation of the reality of the person, but only theology can treat of the genuine, the authentic person."

CHAPTER II: MARY AS THE MODEL OF THE HUMAN PERSON

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined how individuals find their identity as embodied persons in relations of self-giving to God and others. This model of person originates in the immanent Trinity, is revealed in Christ through his self-giving and is constituted through participation of the individual in Christ through the Church. In this chapter I will look at how Mary is the perfect revelation of the person as being-in-relation to Christ constituted in and through the Church.

Various terms describe Mary's personal identity in this context. She is the ecclesial person, the revelation of the nuptial person in the Church and the sacrament of Christ. As I will show later, these terms are interrelated and reveal that Mary is the model of the human person and that the Church constitutes persons *in her form*.

Mary is the model *par-excellence* of the person because she is the creature who has perfectly received God as he has given himself to her. As we shall see in this chapter, Mary's communion with God begins in the Old Covenant, and is brought to fulfilment in the New Covenant through her motherhood of Christ. Her identity expands as she becomes messianic bride and mother of the Church, sharing in Christ's mission of recapitulation. While she is mother of all the living, she herself is also the form and image of the new creature. In the sign of her virginal motherhood she represents the creature constituted *in Christ* through water and the Holy Spirit and hence is the model of the Redeemed in a way that does not take from Christ himself

1.0. MARY IN THE IMAGE OF DIVINE TRINITARIAN PERSON: AS BEING IN RELATION TO GOD

In the three divine persons, relations are subsistent.⁸² Divine persons *are*, because they are-in-relationship. While Mary is not a *subsistent* being-in-relation like a divine person, nevertheless her personhood is *constituted* through her relationship to God the Father as virginal daughter, to the Spirit as virginal spouse and to the Son as virginal mother. The mutual relations of self-giving at the heart of the Trinity, whereby each finds their very nature in self-giving to the other by nature, are revealed in Mary

⁸² St Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), 1a 29,4. "A relation in God is in him not as an accidental entity, but is something subsisting just as the divine nature is."

through grace. In this way Mary becomes *the* model of the *graced* human person in the *image* of the Trinitarian persons and reveals the relationship between God and creation.⁸³ And as such, Mary reveals God himself,⁸⁴ albeit in a way different from Christ and dependent on him. What God reveals through Mary is that his relationship with creation is part of his own mystery, since as love, his desire is to share his divine life with mankind.⁸⁵ Mary is “creation at its most gifted, in the universe of grace”⁸⁶ and thus as one who has opened her being completely to God’s offer of life in all its fullness is the archetype of personhood.⁸⁷

Mary also shares in the personal missions of the divine persons who work out their personhood in the economic sphere through her. The Father’s *generation* of the Son in the immanent Trinity is analogously revealed through her generative motherhood in the economic sphere.⁸⁸ In giving-over her Son to work out the plan of salvation,⁸⁹ Mary also shares in Christ’s obedient assent to the Father’s will which is the revelation of his *self-giving* to the Father in the immanent Trinity. Hence her motherly union with her Son involves such a depth of self-giving that in the spiritual work of salvation it makes her into his bride. The Virgin Mother of God is a manifestation of the nuptial meaning of the person, in the image of the Trinity who is capable of generating love in the image of the Father, only because she has first received it from the Son as he has received all from his Father.⁹⁰ The Mother of God also shares in the mission of the Holy Spirit in the economic sphere, since through

⁸³ See Charles Smith commenting on the Mariology of Hans von Balthasar in, “Mary in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar,” in Alberic Stacpoole, ed., *Mary and the Churches* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1987), 143.

⁸⁴ Von Balthasar sees that it is through Mary who contemplates and lives in the Trinitarian communion of persons that the mystery of God is revealed. He says this without taking away from Christ as the fullness of divine Revelation, see *Dei Verbum* 2.

⁸⁵ “Mary is the woman in whom the life of the Trinity is revealed, the woman who through her existence, compels the divine mystery ...to shine forth and be manifest. The obedience of Christians is, too, and in contemplation especially, the medium in which God reveals himself as three in one,” in Hans von Balthasar, *Prayer*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 156 in Charles Smith, “Mary in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” 143.

⁸⁶ Anthony Kelly, “Mary and the Creed: Icon of Trinitarian Love”, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 69 (2004), 20.

⁸⁷ Brendan Leahy describes Mary as the “Woman of Communion.” Leahy is commenting here on Von Balthasar’s understanding of Mary as “at the centre stage in the drama of the redemption as a woman of communion, with God above all, but also with the people of the Old Testament and with the family of the New Testament” in B. Leahy, *The Marian Profile* (London: New City, 2000), 76.

⁸⁸ Anthony Kelly, “Mary and the Creed,” 22. Kelly describes her as “the chosen associate of the eternally generative Father” and the one who enters into the self-giving of the Father by “bringing forth the one whom the Father begets.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Kelly also makes this point that Mary’s giving of the Son was ‘in the way God gives,’ which means “through the power of the Holy Spirit,” as she gives her Son for the salvation of the world.

⁹⁰ Kelly, “Mary and the Creed,” 22.

her, as the first “new creature” and the dwelling place of God in creation, the Spirit begins the work of *recreation*.

1.1. Mary as sacrament: sign and instrument of communion

The Church as sacrament to the world, is a *sign* and *instrument* of communion with God and with others (LG 1). Mary as *the* “new creature” is one whose flesh has been transformed by grace, constituting her as the New Ark of the Covenant wherein the divine Trinity dwells having ‘pitched his tent’ (Jn1: 14). As her body is God’s dwelling place, all her actions now reveal God, and her life becomes a “praise of his glory.”⁹¹ Hence as the original Temple of God she is also a sacrament fulfilling the definition above of *sign* and *instrument* of communion. Her identity as sacrament of Christ begins with God’s call and choice of her *in Christ* as one of the faithful of the *Old Covenant* thus constituting her role in representing communion (of creatures with God and among themselves) and bringing it about.⁹²

1.2. Sign of the People of God

Mary represents the great “Daughter of Sion,” of the Old Covenant who responded in perfect obedience and faithfulness to God and the “Mother of Sion” who both represented the people and was God’s instrument to *gather* all his faithful children from exile.⁹³ This gathering of the People of God was the preparation for the Church and its symbolic role as Mother of Sion, foreshadows Mary’s role as Mother of the Church.⁹⁴ Hence already in the Old Covenant, God formed a communion *with* creatures and *among* them through a woman who was also the representative sign of this communion.⁹⁵

For the people of Israel, Mary also personified the messianic people of eschatological times⁹⁶ later to be revealed as the people of the New Covenant, the Church. For those in the Church, Mary was therefore a symbolic sign of hope pointing

⁹¹ Mary is thus the sign of the new creature who perfectly glorifies the Father who dwells completely within her. She has become the model of creaturely personalisation as she fulfils the words in Eph 1:14 in her very person.

⁹² Paradoxically Mary’s faithfulness to God as a Jew under the Old Covenant was also because of her pre-redemption in Christ. Hence she lived the inner perfection of the law in Christ.

⁹³ Ignace De La Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant* (New York: Alba House, 1992), 203.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ This gathering of the people into communion through the woman as sign and instrument was of course only possible through the *existence of the Covenant itself*, just as in the new times the gathering into the communion of the Church was only possible through *Christ*, as the one who when lifted up would draw all people to himself, thus fulfilling the Old Covenant in the New.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

forward to the fullness of the identity of the people of God as *all humanity in the Kingdom* of communion with God at the end of time.⁹⁷ She is the woman of the apocalypse, standing on the moon, clothed with stars, personifying Christ's triumph of over evil, to be revealed in all creatures at the end of time.⁹⁸

1.3. The Trinitarian dynamic of God's call and Mary's response

God chose human beings to be holy in Christ.⁹⁹ He sent his Son in order that through him they could respond to this call with the appropriate self-giving love. Christ assimilated Himself to human nature so that human beings could become adopted sons *in* him, the unique divine Son.¹⁰⁰ Now through the Incarnation, the flesh "verbified" has the power to receive grace¹⁰¹ and Mary stands as the pre-eminent model of the son or daughter of God adopted by grace.¹⁰² Mary received all the blessings that God had wished from the beginning of time to bestow on the human being in Christ.¹⁰³ Her assent to God manifests her as a prophetic 'sign' of God's grace and presence among his people.¹⁰⁴

God's call of Mary to be the Mother of God expanded her identity ever anew as she pondered her ongoing life and Christ's life in connection to her own (Lk. 2:51)

⁹⁷ John Paul II in *Redemptoris Mater*, describes Mary as the sign of hope showing that God's election overcomes all evil. RM 11.

⁹⁸ Rev. 12.

⁹⁹ "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will"(Eph. 1). See Treanor's commentary on *Redemptoris Mater* where he notes that in her "blessedness" the Mother of God stands for all people." "In this remarkable design (of God's), "Mary is the first of the fully blessed, the new creation, the community of the redeemed". Treanor, Oliver. *Mother of the Redeemer: Mother of the Redeemed* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1988), 58-59.

¹⁰⁰ Athanasius in Fortman, *The Theology of Man and Grace* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966),102. "It is by the whole process of the Incarnation that this filial assimilation is realised. Because the Son has taken a true human body, our grace, unlike that of Adam, is harmonised to the corporal human condition. This adoptive filiation of the Christian can be identified with his/her divinisation."

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 102-103. "We are sons by the presence in us of the Son who became incarnate to be present to us and to unite us to God. He sends us the Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Son, and who is in us as the Spirit of filiation and says "Father" and is the seal of the Son and conforms us to the Son."

¹⁰² Angelo Schola in "The Dignity and Mission of women: the anthropological and theological Foundations", *Communio* 25 (Spring 1998): 55.

¹⁰³ See Athanasius commenting on this idea in Fortman, *The Theology of Man and Grace*, 102. God's intention was to "bless us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"(Eph. 1:3).

¹⁰⁴ Mary was a sign of God's presence with his people in a similar way to the prophets yet surpassing them. "The Lord is with you" was said to all the other great persons in the history of Israel-Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Saul, David and Jeremiah." See Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God* (Slough: St. Paul, 1991), 70.

in light of this original call.¹⁰⁵ Hence God's work of creation was continual and involved human response.

Mary's complete response is undoubtedly due to God's grace in her life. Firstly, her reception of the Word is only possible because of Christ's eternal assent projected into time, in which she now shares.¹⁰⁶ She therefore *already* shared in her future glorified state and this informed her choices and decisions within temporal time.¹⁰⁷ Her "yes" is constituted in a continual way through the Holy Spirit who is the personification of the Son's full response to the Father in the immanent Trinity yet at the same time her spouse.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless this consent to God is *fully her own*¹⁰⁹ and made possible by her humility¹¹⁰ and faith¹¹¹ worked out through her body, mind and soul. Mary was blessed "because she believed"(Lk.1:45), not only at the moment of the Annunciation, but all through her life up to the cross.¹¹² It was her "obedience of faith" on the pilgrimage of her life, which united her to God¹¹³ and sustained her love. Mary's "yes" in and through Christ makes her a type of corporate personality

¹⁰⁵His call is, defined as an ongoing call to humanity to "the best integration of their past." Marjorie H, Suchocki, "Process Theology and Evolution", *Concilium* 1 (2000): 58. See also LG 57 on the union of the mother with the Son in the light of the plan of salvation.

¹⁰⁶ Von Speyr and Rahner emphasise this point. Von Speyr notes that while the child develops physically in her womb and takes her flesh as his in order to grow, "spiritually, it is more the child who develops and forms the Mother." See Adrienne Von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, 39. When the Son chose the Mother, "he placed in her all his love for men in order to receive it from her." This union occurs at a physical as well as a spiritual and personal level." *Ibid.*, 35. There is "no hard separating line between the growth of the child in the Mother and the development of the Mother through the child." *Ibid.*

Christ learns the shape of his assent in the economic sphere from Mary, even though Mary's self-giving is as a result of her relationship to her Son as Mother. As Rahner states, her "yes" is the effect of God's mercy on her, not the cause of it. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord* (Freiberg : Herder, 1963), 59.

¹⁰⁷ Mary could only say yes to God, but this does not mean that she was under any constraints to say yes or that she was not free, but because it would have been against her fully redeemed and sinless human nature not to have said yes to God.

¹⁰⁸ Christ's yes in the economic sphere and expressed in obedience to the Father's will is the manifestation of his self-giving love in the immanent Trinitarian sphere. See Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God* (Sheed and Ward: Stagbooks, 1967), 29.

¹⁰⁹ Adrienne von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, 37. "The merits of her yes remained hers." Despite Mary's sharing in Christ's consent to the Father, hers is still *freely and personally* given.

¹¹⁰ "She is among the poor and humble of the Lord who waits expectantly to receive salvation from him." See *Lumen Gentium*, 55. Adrienne Von Speyr also elaborates on Mary's humility at the Annunciation, which while it appeared to manifest itself in fear was not a negative fear, but was part of "the openness of her assent" to her mission in both her body and her soul. This consent continued to the cross. See Adrienne von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, 29.

¹¹¹ Mary offers "the full assent of intellect and will." *Redemptoris Mater* 18; *Dei Verbum* 5.

¹¹² *Lumen Gentium* emphasises the ongoing and dynamic nature of this communion between Mary and her Son all through her life "from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death, from the visitation to the presentation, to the public life, suffering and death." LG 57.

¹¹³ RM 14.

representing all those who respond to Christ through grace and in faith.¹¹⁴ Her complete surrender in faith to God is a sign to modern man that love goes beyond reason.¹¹⁵ The dynamic of call and response is worked out gradually in Mary's spousal relation to the Holy Spirit and also through her *continual* expropriation of her life in love in order to appropriate Christ.¹¹⁶ This dynamic is consistent with creaturely identity and human freedom. While Mary was full of grace, this did not mean that her whole life and its course had been revealed to her at once but rather that she was fully disposed through her ongoing communion with God to discover her completed identity. This depended on her humble trust that God's mission for her Son and the expropriation of her own life in relation to his was part of the greater divine plan of covenantal love for her and for humanity.¹¹⁷ Her life was thus a pilgrimage of faith¹¹⁸ always to be seen in relation to Christ. This abandonment to the person and work of her Son in the mystery of Redemption¹¹⁹ is made with the fullness of her femininity¹²⁰ revealing most perfectly the nuptial meaning of the person made for self-giving to Christ and others.¹²¹ She was so completely open to God that her "yes" becomes flesh when her Word meets the eternal Word of God.¹²²

Her mission *unfolds* to its fullness as Christ's does. At the Cross, Christ's Eternal Sonship becomes archetypal for all creatures who will share in his perfect self-giving to his Father to become sons by adoption. The surrender of Mary as "his

¹¹⁴ Christ is a corporate personality who represents humanity's faithful response to God's covenant. She personifies the faithful people of the Old Covenant (who respond to God's faithfulness through their efforts to keep the law), but also fulfils their identity in representing the new creatures who respond to God's covenant in Christ through the Spirit.

¹¹⁵ Man needs to surrender to God in an attitude of faith and trust and cannot demand that everything be understood. De Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 80.

¹¹⁶ I have taken this language of expropriation and appropriation from Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol. 1* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 401.

¹¹⁷ This divinisation of man in the Spirit, is a process, since grace is about relationship and not superimposition. De Lubac takes this idea from Teilhard de Chardin, who sees this process of man's gradual transformation as connected with man's humble and passive acceptance of God's activity. De Lubac, Henri. *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984). 55-56.

¹¹⁸ RM 17 ; LG 58. The Council teaches in *Lumen Gentium* that "faithfully persevering in union with her Son, Mary "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith."

¹¹⁹ LG 56.

¹²⁰ Mary responds with "the fullness of her human and feminine I," in faith, co-operating perfectly with the grace of God and the action of the Holy Spirit. RM 13.

¹²¹ The nuptial meaning of the person made for self-giving takes on a feminine form in Mary yet as I will later show because this form is only possible in and through the Church, it is applicable to both men and women since it is actually an *ecclesial* form of the person in relation to Christ.

¹²² While her motherhood of course was God's work it is also the result of her personal, grace-inspired act of faith. Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 55.

mother” is perfected on the Cross so that she becomes “our mother.”¹²³ At this moment, the same dynamic of expropriation and appropriation is completed for Mary. Like Christ, she is also fully expropriated when her role as his mother is brought to its consummative fruitfulness by surrendering him.¹²⁴ Through her suffering and complete self-abandonment *in faith*, her physical identity as Mother of Jesus becomes transformed and she finds her expanded identity.

Mary is therefore a sign of how human beings reach their full identity through co-operation with God’s grace and in and through their lives. This process starts from God’s initiative and call to personalise the creature in Christ and continues through the creature’s response to this call in the Holy Spirit to grow into the fullness of humanity. In Mary creaturely identity reached its height through the fullest possible extent of creaturely union with infinite divine being. Her greatness was not because she was divinised but because she was *personalised*.¹²⁵ This personalisation revealed in the sign of her virginal motherhood is the form of ecclesial persons, constituted in their reception of God’s Word and their fruitfulness in giving birth to Christ in lives of self-giving and service.¹²⁶

1.4. Mary as sign of *personalisation* through sharing in Christ’s mission

Since in Christ’s being and mission are one, then as Mary reveals only when a person is fully in him can they find their own mission¹²⁷ and hence their ongoing personalisation¹²⁸ by reaching out to others. This pattern is illustrated in Mary when after the “Word became flesh” (Jn1:14) in her, she was immediately impelled to bring

¹²³ Note that for Jesus, his understanding of how he was to surrender his mother as part of God’s plan of salvation came gradually. This can be seen at Cana, where he refers to Mary as “woman” as a foreshadowing of her expansive identity as the New Eve and Mother of the Living in the Church which she was to take. Leahy points out that as Christ grows he learns from Mary’s yes and her self-surrender what it is to be a free and self-giving person. “Jesus learns in human terms that the human restrictions arising from original sin can really be overcome and collapse. Mary reveals the triumph of love over sin and death. He learns from her “freedom and engagement in the revolution of love” and through her he “can envision what a new humanity obedient and loving to God is like.” Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 86.

¹²⁴ *Redemptoris Mater* sees the fruitfulness of Mary’s motherhood in the order of grace as the result of a new love, which grows and comes to maturity at the cross. See RM 23, 24.

¹²⁵ Creaturely power “presupposes littleness and the greatness of this littleness is that immediately it turns towards genuine power.” Schindler, “Creation and Nuptiality,” 280.

¹²⁶ This idea will be the subject of chapter three.

¹²⁷ Stephan Ackermann points out that “if being a person coincides with mission to be accepted in God and if this happens *archetypically* in Christ, then anyone else can be called person only in terms of Christ by virtue of some relationship to or derivation from him.” See Stephen Ackermann, “The Church as Person in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar” *Communio* 29 (Summer 2002): 241.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

that Word to Elizabeth. Her message was precisely “what wonders the Lord had done for her”(Lk. 1:49) since in and through her the communion with God that she had longed for as the faithful daughter of Israel been revealed. The New Covenant was written on her heart and made flesh in her womb. Her process of personalisation had begun and she as sign of the new covenant offered the concrete hope that this personalisation would happen for those she encountered. The dynamic in her life is always communion with Christ and revelation of this communion through mission. Elizabeth recognised this sign, greeting Mary with Joy as “the Mother of my Lord” (Lk.1:43). Later as Mary’s identity at the cross is *fully personalised*, this complete communion with her Son again is immediately manifested in a new mission. She is now not only Mother of Christ “the Life” (Jn.14:6) but now also Mother of *all the living*. At this point she becomes the sacramental instrument of communion of humanity with God, a sign of the role of the Church, which will take on her identity and mission. Each person in the Church will also share in her expanded motherhood and mission as they *sacramentally* represent and bring forth Christ, the Life, to the world awaiting its transformation in him.

1.5. Mary as bride: fullness of communion

The image of the Church as the Bride of Christ is found in many places both in the Old and New Testament¹²⁹ yet Mary is the *realisation* of the Bridal image.¹³⁰ Only by exploring Mary’s identity as Bride can the Church be understood in this dimension.¹³¹ The spousal union between Mary as Bride and Christ as Bridegroom begins in Mary’s womb. St. Augustine speaks of the Virgin’s womb as the chamber of

¹²⁹ The spousal image can be found throughout the Scriptures, representing God’s love for his people. In the Old Testament God’s spousal love for his People is everlasting, faithful and unbreakable, despite their waywardness. In the New Testament, this spousal love is found in God ‘s love for his Son (Jn3: 16) and Christ’s love for his Church (Eph5: 25).

¹³⁰ Von Balthasar sees the Bridal image as essentially feminine and realised in Mary. The bride is essentially woman, that is receptive; one who through acceptance of the seed...is made competent to bring forth and to bear fruit” in Von Balthasar, “Who is the Church”, in *Church and World*, (New York: Herder 1967) in Smith, “Mary in the Theology of Hans Von Balthasar,” 146.

See also Henri De Lubac, *The Splendour of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 243. Here he quotes Rupert of Deutz (*De Spiritu Sancto*, bk. i, ch.viii) who says “Thus the Virgin Mary, who was the best part of the Old Church before Christ, merited being the Bride of God the Father in order to become also the pattern of the new Church, the Bride of the Son of God.”

¹³¹ Angelo Schola writes that it is only through examining the figure of Mary that the bond between Christ and his Church can be grasped in all its profundity. Angelo Schola, “The Dignity and Mission of Women: the Anthropological And Theological Foundations,” *Communio* 25 (Spring 1998): 54.

divine nuptials, where divinity in the Word espouses the flesh.¹³² Both the scenes of the Annunciation when the Holy Spirit overshadows the Virgin and Cana when Christ addresses his Mother symbolically as “Woman” point are a foreshadowing of the deeper mystery of her union with him as Bride revealed at the crucifixion and ultimately the fulfilment of this bridal image in Rev 21:9.

While even as the virgin-daughter of Israel and as virgin-mother of Christ, Mary receives her essence through her spousal self-giving, this is brought to a new fullness at the crucifixion when she experiences *his* self-giving “bridally and in her own soul” and thus “receives the fruits of the Church from her Son.”¹³³ As Bride she shares in Christ’s kenosis in order to surrender him completely to the Father. Here she reveals the *essence* of priesthood and her co-operation with Christ’s redemption, which began at the Incarnation, is complete.¹³⁴

It is her personalisation in Christ, which means there is no contradiction between her being simultaneously Mother and Bride of Christ. While she could not have been Mother except through a spousal communion with God, yet her identity as Spouse arose from her motherly qualities of self-sacrifice, compassion and empathy, enabling her to take her Son’s sacrifice into her heart for herself and for the Church.¹³⁵ This fullness of motherly love becomes spousal union, not in an unnatural way, but in a supernatural way where spiritual union surpasses biological categories. Hence the Mother of God is perfectly able to share in the fullness of Christ self-giving to the Father on behalf of humanity and become Bride.

1.6. Mary as spouse of the Holy Spirit: dynamic communion

Some theologians have erroneously described Mary’s union with the Holy Spirit as hypostatic, others emphasise the indwelling of the Spirit¹³⁶ or speak of the

¹³² *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 44, 3; CCSL 38, 495. St Augustine also says that the “Child-Bridegroom came forth from his chamber, that is, the virginal womb, with his Mother’s virginity unharmed (Sermo 191, 1,2; PL 38, 1010), in John Saward, *Redeemer in the Womb* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco), 1993. See also Henri de Lubac who quotes a similar image from Pope Gregory the Great, *Hom. XXXVIII in Evangelia*, no. 3 (PL, 76, 1283), “when in the mystery of the Incarnation, the heavenly King celebrated the wedding of his Son, giving Him the Holy Church as his companion, Mary’s womb was the bridal bed for this royal Spouse.” See *The Splendour of the Church*, 255.

¹³³ Semmelroth, *Mary, Archetype of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1963), 132.

¹³⁴ Semmelroth, *Mary, Archetype of the Church*, 132.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹³⁶ Others speak of Mary as the vessel of the Holy Spirit. See Hans Von Balthasar in *Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 95; *Office of Peter* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 208. *The Three fold Garland* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 125 in Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 82.

Spirit's possessing Mary as a subject or person.¹³⁷ The Spirit however cannot be seen as hypostatically united to Mary.¹³⁸ Whereas the Word was united immediately and hypostatically to Christ, the union of the Holy Spirit with Mary by contrast grows progressively.¹³⁹ Mary is however a "new sort of presence of the Holy Spirit."¹⁴⁰ She is the sign of the last days where God promised to "pour out his Spirit on all humanity, even his women servants" (Acts 2:17-19, citing Joel 3:1-3).¹⁴¹

As already noted, Mary's motherhood in the economic sphere is parallel to the divine maternity of the Father in the immanent sphere. In both cases it is the Holy Spirit who is the principle of generation.¹⁴² Anthony Kelly compares the Spirit's action in the Father begetting the Son in eternity to the Spirit's action in Mary begetting the Son in time.¹⁴³ The Holy Spirit is thus the life-or generating principle, renewing life and all creation.

While Mary is the Bride of Christ, representative of the Church, she is also the Bride or Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, thus her identity is constituted in a way that integrates in the present her relationship to Christ's past and future identity in regard to his incarnation and kingship. This integration occurs in her life by pondering God's will in the events of her life in relation to her Son through the Spirit who draws her evermore to fuller obedience out of self-giving love. She represents the new creature already sharing in the fullness of the Kingdom through the Holy Spirit, yet on pilgrimage, waiting for the Kingdom to be manifested in glory and fullness. At the Annunciation, Mary's openness to the Holy Spirit drew him to her so that through his overshadowing, she became a fruitful sign as the New Ark of the Covenant.¹⁴⁴ At

¹³⁷ Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, 141.

¹³⁸ Hans von Balthasar, criticises Leonardo Boff's view that Mary can and must be described as hypostatically united to the Spirit. Hans von Balthasar, *Test Everything: Hold Fast to what is Good*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 43-47 in Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 83.

¹³⁹ Fr Manteau Bonamy, *The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, (Kenosha WI: Franciscan Marytown Press, 1977), 30.

¹⁴⁰ Fr Manteau Bonamy, *The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, 56. "The Spirit unites himself to her "in a manner proper and personal to himself as the divine source of all motherhood."

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 65. He writes that "Just as the Holy Spirit draws his origin from the Father, through the Son in the bosom of the Trinity, so too it is the Holy Spirit who came to Mary from the Father by the Son to make of her the gift of Love-the future mother of God."

¹⁴³ Anthony Kelly, "Mary and the Creed," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 69 (2004): 17-30.

¹⁴⁴ Scott Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper* (London: Darton, Longman Todd: 1999), 78. Scott Hahn describes what makes the New Ark Holy; "The Old Ark contained the word of God written in stone; Mary contained in her womb the word of God who became man and dwelt among us. The ark contained manna; Mary contained the living bread come down from heaven. The ark contained the rod of the high priest Aaron; Mary's womb contained the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ. In the heavenly temple, the Word of God is Jesus and the ark in whom he resides is Mary, his mother."

this moment Mary also begins to share in the Spirit's very mission of recapitulating creation.¹⁴⁵ God recapitulates all creation to himself through the Son in the Spirit but only because Christ has taken his flesh from Mary.¹⁴⁶ The Holy Spirit continued to dwell in her through her life, and as her identity as "Mother of the Living" was revealed at the Cross, this prepared the way for other creatures to share in her virginal receptivity to the Spirit. This is illustrated at Pentecost where through her presence and intercession, the Holy Spirit again is compelled to find his resting place not only in her but in other creatures (those of the new People of God gathered around her as the fulfilment of the Mother of Sion image) sharing in Mary's recreation. Her receptivity to the Spirit in whom other creatures now share after Pentecost enables the Holy Spirit to continue to dwell within creation in order to recapitulate it to the fullness of communion in God. Hence the Spirit co-operates with Mary, his spouse, constituting creation in her receptive form so that filling it, it can be recreated in Christ. The Church as the place where God's dwells in creation is therefore an expansion of Mary's personal identity as the new Ark of the Covenant.

2.0. MARY AS THE SIGN OF THE NEW CREATURE

We have seen that Mary is the sign of the new creature because she has perfectly responded to God's call and faithful covenantal love through the Holy Spirit, enabling her to share in Christ's obedient assent to his Father even to the point of the Cross. The following section explains how her virginal-motherhood, sinlessness, and fullness of grace reveal her as the model of the new creature. As she has shared already in Christ's redemptive merits in both body and soul, she is therefore a *perfect* nuptial sign of communion with God. Mary's dynamic spousal relationship to the Spirit revealed through her life of faith is also a sign that the new creature is truly *free* in a way that is *constitutive* of human nature. Objectivity and freedom are perfectly harmonised in the New Law, which is inscribed on Mary's very nature.

¹⁴⁵ Fr Manteau Bonamy, *The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, 66. "From all eternity, God saw her, willed that she should exist so she might receive in time the mission of the Holy Spirit who comes to renew the face to the earth."

¹⁴⁶ See Louis Bouyer, *The Seat of Wisdom* (Chicago: Regnery, 1965), 183-184, 187, in F.M. Jelly, "Towards a Theology of the Body through Mariology," *Marian Studies* 34 (1983), 66-84, 82. "The Father pours himself out for the Son by giving him his Spirit and thus recapitulates the Son to himself. All humanity shares in the humanity of Christ through his mother and hence all humanity "participate" in the recapitulation of the Son by the Father.

2.1. Virgin-Mother: form of the Christian life.

Mary's will to virginity is part of her readiness to submit completely and without reserve in body, mind and soul to God's will. In her assent, Mary died so completely to herself, "that she lived only in her Son and for him"¹⁴⁷ and to this extent she is completely fruitful. In her total surrender, Mary reveals the inner form of the Christian life.¹⁴⁸

Virginity in the New Covenant signifies the openness and hence the capacity of human beings to receive divine life in fullness. This fulfils the physical reality of Old Covenant understanding.¹⁴⁹ Hence in the new creature virginity is a sign not of absence but of *completion* and fulfilment.¹⁵⁰ Mary's womb was virginal, like the formless void at the beginning of creation, until the Spirit of God hovered over it so God could begin his work of creation¹⁵¹ knitting together his Son in her womb. Her physical virginity was unique in that it was that of a woman who was both mother and spouse. Yet this physical virginity was the exterior sign of a complete spiritual virginity to receive the fullness of God's life within her. This spiritual and physical virginity combined to facilitate God's gift to her of divine Motherhood both spiritual and physical. Her virginity which enabled her generativity and fecundity as mother¹⁵² is therefore always connected with her dignity as Mother of God.¹⁵³

The revelation of the virgin-mother (and the mother who remains virgin) within temporal history, was to be the sign awakening the people of Israel to the new times. This paradoxical sign fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that the Virgin will "conceive and bear a son whose name shall be Emmanuel" (Is 7: 14).¹⁵⁴ It manifested not that God was intervening in creation to do something super-natural, but that God was now *uniting himself* to receptive creation to transform it. In Mary's womb, creation was now re-ordered so that now every creature could potentially share in God's own life

¹⁴⁷ Adrienne von Speyr, *Handmaid of the Lord*, 39.

¹⁴⁸ Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 78.

¹⁴⁹ Mary not only represents the purity of the Old Covenant, through external conformity to the law, but fulfils the old law and represents the new law through the fullness of divine life within her. The understanding of virginity in the New covenant arises from the new understanding of purity as what "comes out of a person", what fills their heart and personal being Lv. 11:22; Mk 7:14-23; Ac 10:9-16; 15:19-29; RM 14:14.

¹⁵⁰ Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, 181. Paredes points out the necessity of the virtue of chastity, which enabled Mary respond with complete docility to the Spirit and give herself in complete self-gift to God. Through being completely filled with the Spirit, she was freed from self and any preoccupation with her own needs

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁵³ Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 66.

¹⁵⁴ LG 55 and also Mk. 5:2-3 and Mt. 1:22-23.

and become fruitful. Just as Christ was conceived through the Spirit and formed in Mary's womb, so the children of God in Christ¹⁵⁵ would be formed in the "womb of the Church." The Church Fathers saw this "maternal womb" of the Church as all her sacraments, bringing creatures into union with Christ.¹⁵⁶

Mary receives *Christ in a specific form*,¹⁵⁷ through her receptivity and virginal openness and is related to her Son as Mother in a specifically *personal* way.¹⁵⁸ Hence in Mary's receptive *form*, creatures now experience communion with God as a mutual indwelling or *perichoresis analogous to that found in the Trinity* and through that communion become "spouses" and also fruitful as "mothers." This type of communion between two different natures is possible due to the principle of dual unity found in the Trinitarian *communion of distinct* persons and in the hypostatic union of two *distinct* natures in Christ.¹⁵⁹ Mary's virginal-motherhood is the instrumental source and form of God's recreation of the 'new person' in the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁰ Mary is born not from "human stock, human desire or human will, but from God himself" (Jn1: 12), born of the Spirit from above (Jn3: 6, 7), through *grace*, which she has received from Christ's fullness (Jn1: 14).¹⁶¹ New creatures reborn in baptism take on her form in the Church.¹⁶²

So complete is her union with God, that Mary also points to the fullness of eschatological identity. In her form, all creatures bear seeds of the eschatological fullness of their own identities in the world, which act as a dynamic force pushing

¹⁵⁵ God sent his Son born of a woman, that we might receive adoption as his sons (Gals 4:4).

¹⁵⁶ In relation to her children in the Church, her womb applies metaphorically to the sacraments of the Church which form her children in relation to Christ. As Hugo Rahner points out, this was an image in the writings of the Church Fathers. He gives the examples of the work of Origen and Hippolytus. See Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche, die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Otto Muller Verlag: Salzburg, 1964), 32.

¹⁵⁷ See St Thomas on how for God to communicate and reveal himself, man needs to be able to receive him in a way that is suitable for his creaturely nature.

¹⁵⁸ Kelly writes, "the physical and generative aspects of motherhood occur within the world of *persons*. In this regard, Mary is personally related to her Son, to *who* he is, in his radical identity as God from God and light from light" in Kelly, "Mary and the Creed," 21.

¹⁵⁹ "Dual Unity" is the term that Schola uses to describe the unity of two different natures. Angelo Schola, "The Nuptial Mystery at the Heart of the Church," *Communio* 25 (Winter 1998): 653.

¹⁶⁰ Her virginal-motherhood becomes the "the inner form of Christian life." Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 78.

¹⁶¹ I am not saying that Mary was not born in the normal human way from human parents, but that because she is the first new creature (pre-redeemed in Christ), she has been born from above through water and the Spirit (Jn 3:5-8) in a way that her biological nature has been transformed by God.

¹⁶² See also De Lubac who comments that the theme of Mary's virginal motherhood in relation to the Church was a frequent one in the writings of St. Augustine. See *The Splendour of the Church*, 245-246.

them towards their destiny.¹⁶³ As they grow towards their own fullness, they reveal to other human creatures in the world at the same time that human destiny is only found in communion with God. Those in the Church who live a life of consecrated virginity and who are fruitful in charity particularly reveal this eschatological fullness of human identity.

2.2. Immaculately conceived

Mary's form of receptivity to God is not only virginal but also sinless. Being conceived without sin, there are no obstacles to her reception of God's life and his dwelling in her in the fullness of glory. Being without sin, she could perfectly receive God's love, which in turn enabled her complete self-giving in love.¹⁶⁴ This self-giving shared in Christ's giving of himself to the Father yet at the same time Christ also needed her perfect, full, self-giving made possible through her sinlessness.¹⁶⁵

Mary's association with redeemed humanity is not lessened because of her sinlessness.¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Johnson notes that Tradition credits the Mother of God with supernatural gifts that sometimes make it difficult for humans to associate with her.¹⁶⁷ In order to emphasise Mary's *association* with humanity, Johnson chooses to focus on her fullness of grace rather than her Immaculate Conception.¹⁶⁸ She stresses that the fullness of grace given to Mary did not shield her from discernment and pain but enabled her to live out her life in relation to her Son and his mission in *faith*. By

¹⁶³ Suchocki expresses it in terms of purpose drawing on ones' being towards its fullness: "each occasion of experience, aims towards its own becoming." See M. Suchocki, "Process theology and Evolution," *Concilium* 1 (2002): 59.

¹⁶⁴ In Hans Von Balthasar, *You crown the year with your goodness* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1984), 264-269. Leahy commenting on Von Balthasar's understanding puts it, "it is because she stands outside the fallen world in innocence, preserved from original sin that she can love in a perfect way." See Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 75.

¹⁶⁵ Leahy sees Mary's sinlessness as the ultimate prerequisite of the Incarnation by which the Son could offer himself along with us in the Spirit to the Father. See *Ibid.*, 74. Thus where Mary needed Christ's pre-redemption, Christ also needed Mary's pre-redemption for his work of Redemption.

¹⁶⁶ Just because Mary was conceived without sin, this should not mean that we cannot associate ourselves with her. Sometimes human beings see themselves as too distinct from Mary as though they are completely corrupt because they sin and that she as Immaculate cannot enter into our world of weakness and trials. Yet Mary's faith in the midst of everyday life is a model for all humans. She was not preserved from the struggles that all human beings face in discerning their life's course. See did however *perfectly* discern the will of God and thus is our intercessor before God.

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth Johnson, *Truly Our Sister* (New York: Continuum, 2003): 108.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Mary was "uniquely blessed at the outset with the gift of grace-God's self communication." Just because Mary was without sin that this did not mean she "lived in a bubble of privileges."

emphasising this faith, Johnson seeks to reclaim the Queen of saints as “one of the communion of saints”¹⁶⁹ and a real model of Christian life.

While I agree with Johnson that Mary should be portrayed as a model of the human person I disagree with her need to diminish Mary’s sinlessness (even if Johnson is simply redefining it). I would emphasise rather, that it is precisely in her sinlessness, that Mary is a perfect archetype of redeemed human identity. Being without sin does not make her more “divine” but “more human” since she thus fully conforms to Christ the sinless one who is *fully human*. When God made man in his image and likeness, it was as a being made for perfect communion with him and others. Original sin manifested itself in a separation of creatures from the creator and hence a loss of true creaturely identity. The work of redemption brings beings back into relation with God, others and creation, precisely as finite *creatures*.

Mary perfectly recognised that communion with God was possible since God had offered a way of reconciliation: that of love and mercy. It was because she had *no* sin, and was humble and poor in Spirit that she could recognise *in herself* the work of God’s redeeming mercy and also *attribute to him* (and not to herself) the merits of this work. God held her in being to a greater degree than any other creature and hence she sang the mercy of God to a degree that far surpasses all the redeemed.¹⁷⁰ Rahner writes, “she receives God’s mercy just as we must, for she lives and typifies to perfection what we ourselves are to be in Christ’s sight.”¹⁷¹

Recognising and praising God’s work in Mary is “a way of praising God for the Redemption he has given mankind.”¹⁷² In praising Mary, the Church like Mary herself is only drawing attention to the greatness of God and his mercy¹⁷³ and in no way taking from Christ as Saviour. The Immaculate Conception signifies for all humanity that “God surrounds the life of man with redemptive love.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Johnson, “Mary, Friend of God and Prophet: A Critical Reading of the Marian Tradition,” *Theology Digest* 47:4 (Winter 2000): 319 in David Schindler, “Creation and Nuptiality: A Reflection on Feminism in Light of Schemann’s Liturgical theology,” *Communio* 28 (Summer 2001): 285

¹⁷⁰ From among the redeemed she is also “Mother of the Redeemed.” Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 67.

¹⁷¹ Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 39.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

2.3. Model of the Redeemed?

In order to understand Mary as the sign of being-in-relation in the economic sphere it is important to distinguish her role from Christ's. Christ's role is that of unique Redeemer, and yet model of the Redeemed. Mary is the *first of the redeemed* after Christ.¹⁷⁵ Elizabeth Johnson distinguishes between Christ and Mary as representatives of the redeemed when she says: "God's redemption in Jesus Christ has taken root and has started in the rest of humanity which is not Jesus Christ, so that affirmations about Mary are actually also affirmations about the nature of human salvation."¹⁷⁶

Johnson notes that since the Second Vatican Council, a new emphasis had been placed on Christ's *human* nature.¹⁷⁷ This means that whereas before the Council, Mary was put forward as the perfectly-redeemed-one, representative of the effects of grace in humanity and in the Church,¹⁷⁸ after the Council, *Christ* was put forward as the model of that redeemed human being.¹⁷⁹

There is however no contradiction between Mary and Christ as the model of the redeemed, since Mary is one of the redeemed only because she is *in Christ* and *because* of him.¹⁸⁰ What was accomplished *hypostatically* in Christ is accomplished *analogously* in Mary through grace. Christ is the New Adam, representative of the obedient new man, undoing man's disobedience and Mary is the "New Eve,"¹⁸¹ the representative of being-in-relation to God by grace.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Johnson, "Mary and Contemporary Christology : Rahner and Schillebeeckx," *Eglise et Theologie*, (1984): 181

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 159.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 160.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson is referring specifically to the work of Rahner and Schillebeeckx here in her comparison of theologians understanding of Mary as model of the redeemed both before and after the Second Vatican Council. In his book *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, Rahner says that Mary can be identified as the Model of the Redeemed, since "in her faith of her Spirit and in her Body and soul and all the powers of her being, Mary received the Word of the Father." Johnson points out however that in Rahner's later Christology, *Jesus* is the model of the "free acceptance of God's gift. Jesus as "fully human becomes the one representative of the acceptance of God's self-communication present in the world in a victorious and historically communicative manner." See Johnson, "Mary and Contemporary Christology: Rahner and Schillebeeckx," 164.

¹⁸⁰ "A single yet comprehensive idea of the Blessed Virgin emerges from asking this question about the perfect Christian, who received redemption in Jesus Christ. All that the faith says about the realisation of redemption, about salvation and grace and the fullness of grace, is realised in Mary." See Rahner, *Mother of the Lord*, 38 and Schillebeeck, *Mary Mother of the Redemption*, 101.

¹⁸¹ LG 56.

¹⁸² Semmelroth sees Mariology as a tract between Christology and the teachings on grace. See *Mary, Archetype of the Church*, 13. Rahner also proposes that Mary must be seen within the structure of theology the theology of grace. He begins with the premise that perfect Christianity is to be seen as a *life of grace* where God in his infinity enters the human heart and fills it with his triune life and that this

Mary thus represents the new creature in Christ, re-created and filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁸³ She is “the model of subjective redemption,” the one who personally appropriates Christ’s objective work of Redemption,¹⁸⁴ one of the redeemed, yet exalted from among them as Mother.¹⁸⁵ Mary is fully a creature and not divine, but has been *divinised*, because she is “full of grace”(Lk.1:30). She is the revelation to humanity of the mystery of adoptive filiation¹⁸⁶ and hence is the model of the baptised ecclesial person. What the Father did for Mary in choosing her as his daughter, he would do for all creatures whom he constitutes in her form through the Holy Spirit. While Mary represents new creatures in the order of grace, at the same time she remains above them all as the creature most “full of grace.”¹⁸⁷

Sharing from the beginning of her life in Christ’s risen life, both she and her mission have been transformed.¹⁸⁸ At all times she was led by the Spirit to the perfection of her humanity and her mission to bring others to that perfection as fullness of communion with God. Mary is therefore not only the *sign* of grace in the world, but its *instrument* since there is a perfect correspondence between her personal life full of grace and her outward mission in the history of salvation.¹⁸⁹ She is both an ontological and anthropological sign manifesting that human beings, through Christ, now share in her graces, bestowing on them an exalted dignity – as a redeemed human being.¹⁹⁰ As the “New Eve,” she represents all of humanity and hence is a sign of God’s universal will that all will be holy, marked with his seal, anointed by his Spirit

love overflows to others “drawing them to salvation”, Through Mary, God’s grace descends into the world and is “diffused over mankind.” Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 36, 37.

¹⁸³ Johnson, “Mary and Contemporary Christology,” 181.

¹⁸⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption*, 101. Mary is the “prototype” of all those who receive Redemption, thus of all who are redeemed.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸⁶ *Redemptoris Mater* highlights the mystery of Mary in relation to humanity as the “exceptional daughter of the human race. *RM* 3.

¹⁸⁷ “Because of this gift of sublime grace, she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth, but being of the race of Adam, she is at the same time also united to all those who wish to be saved; indeed “she is clearly the mother of the members of Christ, since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.” *LG* 53.

¹⁸⁸ As Kelly writes “the power of the Resurrection has flowed into the existence of the pre-eminent believer (Mary), to transform her being and to perfect her mission.” Kelly, “Mary and the Creed,” 24.

¹⁸⁹ As the sacrament of Christ and his divine life in the world, she is not only sign to the world of communion with God, but also the instrument of bringing this about, since in her personhood the Spirit united divinity and humanity. The fullness of grace which existed in her, was made manifest in the conception of the Messiah.

¹⁹⁰ Mary is the model of the perfect Christian, the Christian human being exemplified as such, because in the faith of their Spirit and in her blessed womb, with body and soul, then, and all the powers of her being, she received the eternal Word of the Father.” Sec Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 36. Also where he says: “she is the noblest of human beings in the community of the redeemed, representative of all who are perfect and the type or figure that manifests completely the meaning of the Church, grace and redemption, and God’s salvation.” *Ibid.*, 37.

and saved in Christ. In turn, the People of God who share in Mary's receptivity, are holy temples of God and in turn are signs of the new creation to the *rest of humanity*.¹⁹¹

2.4. Sacrament of the Redeemer, Sacrament of the Redeemed

The concept of Mary as God's dwelling place, which is the form of the Church, also relates to the idea of Mary as sacrament of God's divine life. God's communion with Mary's flesh does not mean that *she* is hypostatically united to God but that by taking her flesh, Christ's hypostatic nature, has been formed.

Christ the eternal Word *needs* to be enfleshed to be the sacrament of God expressing divine fullness. Through Mary's self-giving faith, the Eternal Son of God takes flesh from her, connecting his being to hers in such a profound way that she becomes the sacrament of his life just as he is the sacrament of God.¹⁹² Through her bodily actions (*sacramentum*), Mary expresses her self-giving "yes" continually in loving the Word God has given her (*res*). She is the perfect disciple not only saying 'Lord, Lord!' but also doing the will of her Father in heaven,¹⁹³ embodying it in and through every action. It is as sacrament, that Mary's dual role as sign and instrument are combined. She is not only the *sign* of the Redeemer and the redeemed, but in both cases is the *instrument* - the means God has chosen to bring the Redeemer and the redeemed into the world. The outward sign of her motherhood of Christ is the expression of the fullness communion of a creature with God. When St. Augustine wrote, Mary conceived in faith and spirit before conceiving physically, he was highlighting that her physical motherhood is preceded and complemented by her spiritual motherhood and that this becomes the model of spiritual motherhood for ecclesial persons to bring others to communion with Christ.¹⁹⁴ This role is nevertheless only possible due to Mary's physical motherhood since in her form (as we have seen) matter now has sacramental power to communicate the glory and divine life of God. Hence she is the *matrix (mother)* of all sacramentality.

¹⁹¹ See LG 9. What happens in the Church on a large scale (as expressed in LG 9) occurs at a micro level through ecclesial persons: "that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men... is a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race."

¹⁹² *Redemptoris Mater*, 17, emphasises that Mary is united to God through faith. Since only the Son knows the Father, (Mt 11:27) Mary does not know him or cannot be united to him as Christ is. See also Rahner on Mary's faith in *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 13.

¹⁹³ Mk 4: 34-35; Lk. 7:21; Lk. 6: 46.

¹⁹⁴ St. Augustine, *Sermo CCXV*; PL 38, 1074 in John Saward, *Redeemer in the Womb* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 104.

2.5. Sign of the nuptial meaning of the body:

The idea of Mary as the sacrament of Christ points to the goodness of matter. Just as the goodness of the body made by a loving God is revealed in Genesis¹⁹⁵ and sharpened through Christ's Incarnation, so too Mary's *bodily* union with Christ expresses the goodness of the body re-created in grace. Mary reveals the anthropological truth that the creature is an integrated composite of body and soul and that Redemption is the recreation of this integral composite.¹⁹⁶ Because of Mary's "yes," creation has the nuptial mystery inscribed in its nature, and all creatures are now capable of filial communion with God the Father by participating in Christ's divine nature.¹⁹⁷

In a more specific, anthropological way, Mary's personhood reveals the nuptial meaning of the human body as sacrament. Just as her communion with God is revealed externally in fruitfulness through her motherhood,¹⁹⁸ so henceforth in her form it is possible for the human body¹⁹⁹ to be the "sacrament" of the *person (that person being one whose inner life is communion with God)*.²⁰⁰ Schindler writes on this point that creaturely being has an "original-symbolic-nuptial meaning revealed in Mary."²⁰¹ In the same way that Christ's body at the Resurrection was the perfect sign of the Kingdom²⁰² Mary revealed that the Kingdom *was* permeating creation. As she already *shared* in this eschatological fullness of divine resurrected life, so she was the

¹⁹⁵ Gen. 1:31.

¹⁹⁶ Mary Timothy Prokes, "The Nuptial Meaning of Body in light of Mary's Assumption." *Communio*, (Summer 1989), 175. She says, "Redemption is revealed in the association of Christ and his mother."

¹⁹⁷ Angelo Schola, "The Nuptial Mystery," 654.

¹⁹⁸ Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality," 279. Schindler describes the fruit as "the fruit of the gift as one with the Giver in its givenness."

¹⁹⁹ Prokes, "The Nuptial Meaning of the body in light of Mary's Assumption," 161.

²⁰⁰ Pope John Paul II explains the nuptial meaning of the body in terms of male and female existing together and in self-gift to each other as image of God. In explaining the nuptial meaning of the body, the Pope explains that the image of God seen in humans is reflected in male as "alone" and the female as "helper." This affirms that "alone," man does not realise his essence, but only in self-gift to the other, by existing, "with someone"- and even more deeply and completely - by existing "for someone." See Pope John Paul II, General Audience, Jan. 9th 1980 in *The Theology of the Body*, (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1997), 60. He also says "the human body with its sex, masculinity and femininity...includes right from the beginning the nuptial attitude, that is, the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the man-person becomes a gift and by means of this gift fulfils the very meaning of his being and existence." See General audience, Jan 16th, 1980 in *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁰¹ Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality," 277.

²⁰² "Jesus made his body the great sign of the Kingdom". Paredes sees that it was through his virginal chastity that Jesus' body became the great prophetic symbol of communion, "until it becomes the body that incorporated all within itself in the Resurrection." Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, 174. Prokes underscores the dignity of a woman's lived body and gifts in union with the Resurrected Christ. Prokes, 176.

sign of the victory of Christ over the weakness of humanity,²⁰³ and over sin and death.²⁰⁴ Her body as integral sign of the Kingdom also showed that the human body's nuptial capacity self-giving *can be actualised*, to bring *persons* into communion.²⁰⁵ God's love had permeated her integral personhood in such fullness that at the end of her life on earth she was drawn *body and soul* to him.²⁰⁶ Hence through sharing in the power of Christ's Resurrection over sin and death, Mary was assumed to heaven to make this complete gift of her integral self to God. This points to doctrine of the *resurrection of the body*, indicating the goodness of the created body, which because it has been in-formed by God's divine life (re-created) will thus be recapitulated, brought to its fullest participation in God's life and hence the fullest consummation of its identity.

The sign of Mary in glory, points to the Church's eschatological holiness in its spousal relationship to the glorified lamb. Like Mary, the Church is always holy since it is permanently in union with Christ *the holy one*. The image of Mary's glory in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 12) is one of "the Woman" shining with a light *that does not come from her*.²⁰⁷ This light is God's (1Jn. 1:5) since he is "the source of all light"(1Jn. 1:7). Hence Mary's light is that of the grace and holiness which God has given to her and which she radiates through her transparency to him.²⁰⁸ Here she is the sign of the redeemed who radiate God's eschatological glory already in the midst of creation through opening themselves to his mercy.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 17.

²⁰⁴ Prokes, "The Nuptial Meaning of the body in light of Mary's Assumption," 160

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁰⁶ "The unity of body and soul is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the 'form' of the body, i.e./ it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of mater, in man, are not two natures untied, but rather their union forms a single nature." See the Council of Vienne (1312): DS 902 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas, 1994), #365.

²⁰⁷ De la Potterie, quoting Primasius says that the Woman vested with the sun, is "the Church clothed again with Christ". Thus she is also as beautiful as the moon (Sg 6:10). See Ignace De la Potterie, *Mary, Mystery of the Covenant* (New York: Alba House, 1992), 23.

²⁰⁸ See von Balthasar on the transparency of the new creature, the believers in Christ who "are like mirrors in their pure transparency, which is an anticipatory assurance of the new aeon in the old, from 'glory to glory' which must mean from the hidden glory of Christ, which they see proleptically in faith and reflect, to an open glory which manifests itself in the kerygmatic and existential public character of the gospel in the world," in H. Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, Vol 1* (London: T&T Clark, 1982) 521.

²⁰⁹ See LG 65. "While in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph. 5:27), the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness."

Understanding Mary as the sacrament of Christ and the sign of the nuptial meaning of the Body reveals that the Kingdom is not merely a *spiritual* reality.²¹⁰ This is because *Matter*, now redeemed through Christ in the *Mater (the woman)*, has an identity which does not end with its material disintegration, but which bearing Mary's receptivity to God, will be taken up in Christ and through him.²¹¹ Mary is the sign that all present human experience has the potential to be glorified.²¹²

2.6. Sign of the person as dynamic

As perfect new creature Mary thus symbolises the generativity of creation under the power of the Spirit.²¹³ She expresses the freedom of the child of God – one who is continually held in existence by the Spirit.²¹⁴ Her being is the sign that the Spirit of the Lord does not depersonalise²¹⁵ but *personalises*, by bringing creatures into adoptive sonship. The Holy Spirit is hence present in Mary and in each human subject capable of receiving him in a uniquely personal way as if he were the only creature he comes to.²¹⁶ Hence through the Holy Spirit God *knows* each person fully²¹⁷ and constitutes personhood through drawing person into union with him in a

²¹⁰ The kingdom is "a life in all its new dimensions." Prokes, "The Nuptial Meaning of the Body in light of Mary's Assumption," 168.

²¹¹ Many feminists accept women's relationship to Matter, however they often accept it at the expense of reason, which they reject as the tool of patriarchy. In rejecting reason, they prioritise matter as feminine, but disconnect it from any relationship to reason in order to shape it. They fall into irrationality. Instead of seeing matter as inherently revealing of the transcendent, as in a Christian anthropology, they prize matter *in itself* in opposition to their understanding of a male patriarchal world, which they say, has been shaped by 'reason' which they claim is a masculine concept. Rather than re-embodying this reason, they insist on the autonomy of matter as feminine which they aim to show can exist as feminine without being fashioned by the "male concept of reason." The dignity of matter however is that it has the capacity to be formed by its relationship to the divine other. Matter is good in itself inherently since God has created it, but all the more since God has now transformed it through its recreation possible through the incarnation of Christ in the Holy Spirit. God has fashioned matter by his will, which is eternal reason. Mary as *Mater*, (as *being-in-relation to the Son* reveals the nuptial meaning of the person) and is *the* first and foremost model of recreated matter, fashioned in relationship to God. Matter, of which humans are the peak, is thus no longer mere materiality. Rather *Matter* has taken the form of *Mater* and exists in a continual relationship to the divine will (or reason) in the form of the Holy Spirit.

²¹² Prokes, "The Nuptial Meaning of the Body in light of Mary's Assumption," *Communio* (Summer 1989), 171.

²¹³ Anthony Kelly, "Mary and the Creed," 22; 26.

²¹⁴ Mary's relationship to the Holy Spirit constitutes her freedom. See Parades, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom", (Cor. 3:17). Mary opened up to the Spirit in complete docility and thus she was totally free. Paredes, *Mary and the Kingdom of God*, 141.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, IX, 22: PG 32, 110, in *Dominum et Vivificantem*, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1986), 59.

²¹⁷ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 79. "God's knowledge is a loving knowledge."

dynamic way²¹⁸ but also in periods of quiet repose with him in prayer.²¹⁹ The Spirit constitutes personal freedom by enabling a person make choices according to an objective understanding of their being in a way that brings peace. Their freedom thus becomes the “path towards the ultimate fulfilment of their “I.”²²⁰ As Mary illustrates, when a human being is rooted in God there is a peace and certain understanding that decisions are correct in accord with what is true²²¹ in contrast to the angst experienced by Sartre’s “free man.”²²²

The *New Law* of freedom therefore offers a *subjective-objectivity*, meaning that while it is in complete conformity with human nature (revealed in the person of the Son), it is *personally* fashioned for each person through the Holy Spirit.²²³ Christ’s life took the Old law to new interior dimensions, revealing that ultimate freedom meant complete self-gift in accord with God’s law of love. This brought him into conflict with those who interpreted it merely externally. Mary also kept the outer and inner form of the law (in Christ) even before the new times were revealed through her as sign (Is 7:14). This she did in accord with the truth and dignity of her human nature made for communion with God and others. She manifests the New Law written on the

²¹⁸ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 81. The indwelling of the Spirit of God, enables the human person to “witness to the generosity or the expansivity of being which in an incarnate spirit constitutes a source of dynamic unity and unification from within”

²¹⁹ While the Spirit’s role is dynamic recapitulation, it is also “mystical repose and rest in the sons and daughters of God...the Spirit of God is an eternal operation outwards: and he desires that we, too, should work eternally and so resemble him, but he is also (mystical) repose and (mystical) fruition in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of all His beloved in an eternal rest” Ruusbroek, Vanden VII Trappen, tr. F. Sherwood Taylor as *The Seven Steps of the Ladder of Spiritual Love* (Westminster: England), 52 in Franssen, *The New Life of Grace* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 53.

²²⁰ Angelo Schola, “Freedom, Grace and Destiny.” *Communio* 25 (Fall 1998): 452. Modernity sees laws and norms as contradictory to “personal freedom” which it constructs through choices made on irrational impulses. When man has rooted his identity in God however, his decisions are rooted in *reason*, which is the objectivity needed so that choices further his identity. See also Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 82. He writes on freedom of choice: “it is not something that is rooted in an irrational flow of moral and psychological phenomena. In fact it is rooted in reason.”

²²¹ Although the aim of the man in Christ unconsciously and consciously may always be to root his being more deeply in God, often he makes the wrong decisions, which actually lead him away from God. However if these decisions are made according to conscience (in accord with God’s eternal law and his objective essence) then they are still making the correct use of his freedom.

²²² The modern understanding of freedom simply aims at a “freedom from” any objective dimension to personhood which it sees as an imposition on “existence.” Angelo Schola writes, “one of the most common risks to which our time is prone is the tendency to identify the entire dynamic of freedom with the possibility of choice, which is only one of its elements...” Schola, “Freedom, Grace and Destiny,” *Communio* 25 (Fall 1998): 452. In attempting to create an “existence” without an “essence” rooted in God however, man becomes a mere slave to the possibilities of choice and never actually possesses himself in order that his choices help shape who he is. *Ibid.*, 453.

²²³ The New Law is Christ and his own self-gift which is inscribed on man’s nature making nuptiality the key to its meaning.

human heart, lived in freedom through Christ in the Spirit to make a continual self-gift and thus perfect the nuptial call.

2.7. Personhood: constituted in receptivity for self-giving

As we have seen, Mary as virginal-mother and spouse is the sign that persons are made for communion in the image of the Trinity expressed through receptivity and self-giving.²²⁴ God fashioned her identity as person through her self-surrender to the person and mission of her Son, made possible through her prior reception of God's life. Feminists often blame Mariology for stereotyping woman as passive in their self-giving to "male others" who then construct a false female identity used to justify their oppression of women.²²⁵ These feminists claim that the image of Mary has enabled men to stereotype women as the supportive caring faithful ones, strong in bearing pain, but all from the advantage that it offers to them as men.²²⁶ While there is no doubt that in the past women were treated as secondary to men, the truth is that Mary's identity was more likely to have been made according to the prevailing societal image of women, rather than vica-versa. The feminist criticisms outlined fail to see that Mary is not merely representative of *female* identity but of *human* identity, which includes a view of men as receptive and self-giving in order to be fully human. A proper understanding of Mary's identity reveals that she *is* fully *human* and combines what is seen as the traditional female virtue of receptivity with the perceived traditional male virtue of action-initiative. Both active and passive characteristics are integrated perfectly in Mary through her union with Christ in the power of the Spirit. Ecclesial persons combine the best of "male" and "female" qualities by grace to enable them to more fully represent Christ to the world. This will only happen if they are fully surrendered to God in openness and humility to allow God's power to transform them. Mary is the image of the creature in the Church who

²²⁴ Her personhood as virginal-mother bears the echo of the Trinitarian subsistent being in a perichoretic being mutually in and for the other person.

²²⁵ Elizabeth Johnson criticises this model which is reproduced in the in the Church where" the Marian principle of holy obedience is used so that women divest themselves of self will and are obedient to eh word of God as articulated by male authority figures. ...This leads to the subordination of women and the privileging of men spiritually, psychologically and politically" in Elizabeth Johnson, "Mary, Friend of God and Prophet: A critical Reading of the Marian Tradition," *Theology Digest* 47; 4 (Winter 2000), 317-325 in Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality", 285.

²²⁶ Johnson refers to *Mulieris Dignitatem* and *Redemptoris Mater*, 46 in her argument here as Schindler points out in "Creation and Nuptiality", 286.

realises her relationship to God in humble and receptive worship²²⁷ in order to be fully creative and fruitful with God's power. Schindler goes so far as to say that Mary is actually a being in *subordination to* God and assumes the power of God as other.²²⁸ As the handmaid of the Lord, she did not see her humanity as an obstacle to sharing in God's divinity. Rather in humility while she was aware of the fragility and weakness of being human, she was thus enabled to live in God through adoration of him. It was precisely this integration of receptivity to transcendence into her every action which gave her unsurpassed dignity.

2.8. Self possession as a condition of self-giving

From all this we can say that Mary is the sign of the mature human being who is fully "self-possessed" since her finite freedom is rooted in God's essence²²⁹ and hence can give herself freely to others.²³⁰ Von Balthasar,²³¹ Rahner²³² and Maritain²³³ all write that while freedom is found in self-giving, this is only possible if one is first in possession of oneself and has an essence.²³⁴ Self-possession is connected to the person's ability to make choices, which correspond to and constitute her human

²²⁷ This is what is meant by "praying at all times" - a constant disposition to worship God who dwells within the soul. It means hence that all actions are transformed in his power and are sacramental-the expression of this interior life of union.

²²⁸ Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality," 277. Schindler uses the word subordination, but perhaps the word dependency on God or humility might convey Schindler's concept better than 'subordination.'

²²⁹ Mature beings are those who realise that they are finite and need to surrender their finite freedom to a being who has infinite freedom. See John Zizioulas' treatment of this idea in *Being and Communion*, 54-59. Schola and Von Balthasar emphasise that freedom is about being able to go out in relation to another being, but only a being who themselves has a freedom "capable of self possession. Von Balthasar says: "finite freedom as *autoexousin*, as consent to oneself in the freedom of self-possession, is by no means alienated but rather inwardly fulfilled by consenting to that Being-in-its totality which has now unveiled itself as that which freely grounds all things, as that which, in infinite freedom, creates finite freedom." See Hans Von Balthasar, *Theo Drama Vol 2*, 242 and Schola, "Freedom, Grace and Destiny," *Communio* 25 (Fall 1998): 454.

²³⁰ John Paul II writes that only mature human beings *recreated in the Spirit*, can give the gift of themselves in freedom to another. See *Redemptoris Hominis*, (London: Catholic Truth Society), 21.

²³¹ Freedom is rooted in the ability to say yes to one's own being, "the capacity for consent." Hans Von Balthasar, *Theo Drama: theological Dramatic Theory, vol.2, Man in God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 212 in Schola, "Freedom, Grace and Destiny," 453.

²³² See Karl Rahner, who relates freedom to being in the tradition of St. Thomas. "Freedom is not originally the capacity of choosing any object whatsoever or the ability of adopting an individual attitude towards this or that; it is rather the freedom of self-understanding, the possibility of saying yes or no to oneself, the possibility of deciding for or against oneself, which corresponds to the knowing self possession, the understanding go the subject nature of man" in Rahner, "Theology of Freedom" in Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol 6. (London: DLT, 1969), 184 -185.

²³³ In order to give to another one needs firstly to have found oneself Jacques Maritain calls freedom, "self mastery for the purpose of self giving." See Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 82.

²³⁴ Schola writes that Von Balthasar emphasises that the ability to choose correctly depends on one's own self-possession. Rahner also uses this term, "self possession", as noted in previous footnote.

nature.²³⁵ As all her choices were made in light of her human nature rooted in God, she was fully self-possessed and free. As her body and soul were integrated in God, her self-surrender, which shared in Christ's unconditional assent to the Father was manifested through all her actions.²³⁶ She showed that when a creature is rooted in divine Love freely given and received, she can give of self without demanding from the other. Participation in God's life is the essence and source of Christian action, since "cut off from the vine (human beings) can do nothing" (Jn. 15). Apart from Christ, human finite love is imperfect and can lead to unstable relationships of dependency, fear, attachment, domination, power or even possessiveness. In short, Mary is the sign of the mature person capable of *charity*²³⁷ expressing the fullness of human existence²³⁸ gained through the best use of freedom.²³⁹ Her charity is the outward manifestation of an inward spousal self-giving to God, which led her to suffering and the cross as the fullness of that spousal love.²⁴⁰ Hence her life is a reflection of the Trinitarian kenosis in the economic sphere. As the Spirit unites immanent Trinitarian persons in self-giving, so too the same Spirit preserves the union between Christ and his Father in the economic sphere even during the depths of his abandonment at the crucifixion. In an analogous way, the Spirit led the Mother of God to ever deeper love of her Son even until her darkest hour at the foot of the cross. There while she perceived she was abandoned, she was actually being held in *consummate* spousal union with God. Here in fact God had most fully united himself to her through her self-emptying to Christ yet was *most* hidden from her. This sketch of Mary is that of the person who most united to God is most fully mature, living according to his/her nature. This reveals that personal freedom is not about choosing

²³⁵ Karol Wojtyla speaks of the importance of self-possession from a phenomenological approach to the person. The person's body can only express the person if he is self-possessed, meaning that the body is "subordinated" to the truth of the person through his choices and "In this way the dynamic transcendence of the person - spiritual by its very nature - finds in the human body the territory and the means of expression...the body is the territory and in a way the means for the performance of action and consequently for the fulfilment of the person." Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), *The Acting person*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 205.

²³⁶ Schola, "Freedom, Grace and Destiny", 460.

²³⁷ When human love is rooted in Charity (agape), it can share in God's unconditional and complete self-giving, seeking nothing back. By itself human love usually seeks something to complete itself and is conditionally given on this basis.

²³⁸ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 83. He writes: "the spiritual existence of love is the supreme revelation of existence for the self."

²³⁹ RH 21.

²⁴⁰ This freedom which leads to sufferings is seen in Mary's life, in the life of the Church and also in the lives of persons in the Church. See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "Mary-Church-Office", *Communio* 23 (Spring 1996): 195.

to avoid pain and discomfort in life (which is a human impossibility) but involves the ability to live through life's difficulties, embracing them while rooting oneself in God. Freedom enables an ability to choose God's will in all situations including the abandonment in blind faith to God when no choice seems possible. While those situations seem the darkest they are in fact bright with a divine light, so bright that it blinds the person to believe that God has abandoned him. All the while he is in fact *most fully present* and thus *the person is most fully himself*. Mary's faith did not leave her at her moment of perceived abandonment and it is here that she is also the model of hope for those in the Church. Her life is the archetype of the journey of the baptised person in the Church who from the moment of baptism into Christ's death is rooted in Christ and so created for ongoing self-giving even to the point of abandonment at death. While the person may misuse his freedom, nevertheless the Spirit is always drawing him to give ever more of himself and through this to discover his need of God. Unfortunately the person who attempts to deny the Spirit of God within him in the hope of finding freedom *apart* from God ultimately *loses* his nature and his freedom.²⁴¹ As Mary's life illustrated, her self-surrender still involved *her* decisions, but through the Spirit, she could accept situations like the death of the her Son, which to human reason were inexplicable but were fully compatible with the logic of a love comprehended by faith.²⁴² Her faith thus revealed the Spirit as the source of her freedom.²⁴³

3.0. MARY AS SACRAMENTAL INSTRUMENT OF THE NEW CREATURE

In the context of Mary as the sacrament of the Redeemer, the previous section has examined how she is simultaneously the sign of the new creature or the "person in Christ." While her being sacramental sign is intrinsically linked to her being as sacramental instrument (and is one thus implied integrally in the previous sections), as a theme it nevertheless needs to be examined as a separate brief section in order to

²⁴¹ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 81. Here Maritain points out that personality is the spiritual soul and it enables the human to "possess its existence, to perfect itself and to give itself freely."

²⁴² Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 55. Maritain writes that the actions of the saint are sometimes contrary to reason, but are always compatible with love. This is because they are led by the Spirit to do the law of God, not from without, but from the "*inner impetus* received from the Spirit of God in the depths of their incommunicable subjectivity."

²⁴³ *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 51. "Faith in its deepest essence is the openness of the human heart to God's self-communication in the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes; "The Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2Cor 3:17). When the Triune God opens himself to man in the Holy Spirit, this reveals and also gives to the human creature the fullness of freedom. This faith was manifested in a sublime way through the faith of Mary."

highlight the nature of Mary's instrumentality of the new creature. This role as instrument is exercised precisely in her *being as sign* which *equates* with her personalising mission in bringing the Kingdom towards its completion in particular through her virtues of hope and faith. These she exercised in the pilgrim journey of her life with Christ until her own fulfilment of identity in her Assumption and glorification. This thematic exposition is also necessary in light of understanding the Church as the instrument of the Kingdom, part of her identity as universal sacrament of salvation (developed as part of the next chapter).

3.1. Mary as instrument of the Kingdom : through a *personalising* Mission

Mary's free actions all point to a purpose - that of sharing in God's mission of recapitulation. From all that has been said up to now, we can call her mission that of personalisation. Beginning with the fact that through Mary the Kingdom first came to *permeate* creation, it is thus also through her that creation is continually moved beyond itself to fulfil itself. We can see how even before Jesus' public signs inaugurating the Kingdom of God, it is Mary herself who is *the* sign of the Kingdom come (already but not yet). When she rushes in haste to Elizabeth, Christ is within her. Thus she is already proclaiming God's reign in the world. Here she is most obviously Christ's sacrament. In her *Magnificat*, she proclaims the saving work of God, now occurring in the new times even through the lowliest of his creatures. She herself is the sign that the new creation will encompass even the poorest. Elizabeth recognises this and together the women are the sign of the fruitfulness of the New Covenant through receptivity to God. Mary's fruitfulness however is the very source of all new life. Later at the beginnings of her Son's public ministry at Cana, it is Mary who indicates that the new life of the Kingdom will be based on faithfulness to the Word of God (her Son)-"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn.2: 5). Jesus will tell them to "keep the commandment of love" which she already embodies in her self-giving. Only by rooting themselves in him (Jn15),²⁴⁴ can the disciples keep the command of love so that the Kingdom grows in their midst as the sign of communion. This reveals that individuals in the Church are "no longer servants but friends,"²⁴⁵ personalised by

²⁴⁴ The Father and Son will only come to dwell in the disciple if they keep the command of love and self-giving (Jn14: 22-26). It means that disciples experience the love of God and so are capable of loving others in the way that Christ loved them; treating others, as they would wish to be treated personally; not judging others to avoid judgment themselves.

²⁴⁵ Since Christ reveals to them "everything he has learnt from his Father" (Jn 15:14-15).

being brought into divine and human communion. This work continues until the “Kingdom has come” and all humanity are personalised.

3.2. Mary as instrument of the Kingdom through hope and faith

Mary reveals the identity of the person in the Church who lives as a pilgrim in the in-between period between Christ’s ascension and his second coming. She manifests to the world that human life need not be full of fear, tension and anxiety in this state of existence when it is lived in Christ through the Church. After Christ ascended she (who was among the apostles yet simultaneously was their queen) had faith that the Kingdom would come, revealing that “hope is not deceptive”(Rom. 5:5).²⁴⁶ Her hope was ultimately based on the faithful God of the Covenant, who does not revoke his love despite the sufferings this life may bring. Trusting in this love, she also *shared* in it and revealed herself as the perfect woman of the covenant. Lack of hope is based on man’s belief that the world can only be a better place through his own efforts, yet realising his own human imperfections and inability to do this, falls into depressive introspection. As the person of Mary shows however, *finite* human nature points beyond this despair to the need to trust in a permanent love which fulfils human nature. Only by sharing in this unconditional, everlasting love will man find his ability to love others and thus discover his own identity.²⁴⁷ In Mary’s form, accepting and trusting in God’s covenantal love, man is lifted from the limitations of his finiteness and is constituted as *person*. In their pilgrimage together towards the fullness of communion in the Kingdom, Mary’s faith sustains them.²⁴⁸

4.0. CONCLUSION CHAPTER II

In this chapter, I have shown how Mary is the model of being-in-relation. She opens herself to a relationship with God the Father, and through sharing in Christ’s full

²⁴⁶ See Rom. 5:5.

²⁴⁷ This lack of trust is illustrated today by the unfortunate rise in marriage breakdown. Marriage is becoming increasingly undermined as it is not rooted in this covenantal love of God but based on a purely human pledge to be faithful. As such, one spouse cannot ‘trust’ the other, and neither is admitting that only with God’s love can they hope in the other despite their weaknesses and failings. Thus one cannot give himself/herself to the other, fearful of the rejection and abandonment, and relies on merely human pledges of love, which are conditional.

²⁴⁸ Agnes Cunningham, “Mary’s Faith-Gift of the Holy Spirit,” *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998): 274-286 and LG 53 also see RM 26 “In the Upper room Mary’s journey of faith, meets the Church’s journey of faith,” RM 27. RM 8 also emphasises the Christological aspects of Mary’s faith.

assent through the Spirit, responds wholeheartedly to him and his will. The truth of her virginity is also a symbol within the context of the Kingdom of full creaturely openness to divine life. Hence Mary is “full of grace” and this is manifested not only in her divine motherhood as a physical fact but in complete fruitfulness as the consequence of her spiritual union with God. Her relationship to the transcendent Other is embodied and embraced through her maternity.

Mary is also the sign of the “free” person in her relationship to the Holy Spirit who perfects her will to choose well and be re-created in self-giving. She embraces, but surrenders her creaturely finiteness in order to share in the infinite freedom of God and be *personalised*. As *the* person in grace, her body thus reveals its intrinsic nuptial meaning as spouse of God. Hence she is an integral sign and a sacrament of Christ.²⁴⁹ In her Assumption, the *destiny* of the recreated body is manifested. Matter recreated in her form and impressed with a grace-capacity, now sacramentally makes present the eschatological fullness of communion.

The pattern of Christ’s perfect response is worked out through grace in Mary. Hence all other human beings can appropriate Christ and share in the paschal mysteries only in the *form* of Mary made possible through the Church and expressed in worship and adoration. In her free self-giving to God and to others, Mary is a sacrament to the world of authentic personhood and this role continues through the lives of ecclesial persons.

In the final chapter, I will show how the Church is the *expansion* of Mary’s personal identity as “other in relation to Christ” and how individuals are sacraments of Christ at a personal level only since they have first shared in Mary’s identity through being in the Church. In other words individuals only represent Christ through being in Mary’s receptive form and this is only possible through a life in the Church. By sharing in Christ’s life and mission in the communion of his Body, individuals find their real identity.

²⁴⁹ See Pope John Paul on freedom as the basis of the nuptial meaning of the body. The human body right from the beginning includes the nuptial attribute, the *capacity* of expressing love as self-gift. This freedom comes from self-mastery and the fact that they were not ashamed of their own bodies and sex. They were free with the freedom of the gift of each other so that “as man and woman they could enjoy the whole truth, the whole self-evidence of man, just as God Yahweh had revealed these things to them in the mystery of creation”. See Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 64.

CHAPTER III: THE CHURCH AS SIGN AND INSTRUMENT OF PERSONHOOD IN MARY'S FORM

INTRODUCTION

In this third chapter I will explain how the Church is in the form of Mary and how through its sacramental life, which I will refer to as its *feminine form*, persons are constituted as beings-in-relation to Christ.

The first chapter began with modernity's definition of persons as autonomous individuals, prioritising an arbitrary "freedom" disconnected from their human bodies, from others and from God. At the end of chapter one, I hinted how the Church offers an understanding of personhood that is constituted in a freedom found through self-surrender to God as infinite Other. In relation to Christ this identity is dynamically worked out through the Holy Spirit and the reception of the Eucharist. In the second chapter, I portrayed Mary as the model of the person whose identity is worked out as being-in-relation to God, as Father, Son and Spirit. As Virgin, Mother and Spouse, her personhood is paradoxically constituted in her *self-giving* and in this she becomes a sign of the new creature.

In this final chapter both these ideas are synthesised. I will examine how Mary's triplex identity is represented by the Church and by those in the Church in a way that describes a "new creature" in the new order of creation through grace. Just as Christ represents human beings by nature, Mary represents them by grace and thus persons in the Church share in her form of receptivity to Christ and fruitfulness from him. Hence ecclesial persons share in her "virginity" in their openness to God; they share simultaneously in her "maternity" through giving birth to him in their lives of charity and exercising the motherly role of bringing others to fullness of communion; and share in her "spousality" by revealing the nuptial meaning of the body. Since Mary lived her virginity and motherhood at a spiritual as well as a physical level and her spousality at a spiritual level hence ecclesial persons share spiritually in Mary's being in relation to Christ. This points to the reality that for persons in Christ through the Church, their relationships to others will also transcend biological categories.

Mary's role as mother also applies to the Church's *personalising* action of re-creating new creatures in Christ through the sacraments. Through insertion into Christ's Body and his mission, ecclesial persons in turn act as a *personalising* force in the world, calling others outside the Church to awaken to their true nature as human

persons in Christ. Hence their role is “sacramental” both as *sign* and as *instrument*, particularly through service to others and participation at the Eucharistic liturgy, which continues the work of recapitulating humankind and creation to God. This is because the Eucharist constitutes the Church, ecclesial persons themselves and hence also the world, to which the Church itself is in service.

Consequently ecclesial persons, sharing in these three aspects of Mary’s life-giving form, find the fullness of their personal identity precisely as sacraments of Christ’s life and mission to the world.

1.0 THE CHURCH: SIGN OF GRACE AS VIRGIN, MOTHER AND SPOUSE

The Church is the sign and the instrument of grace in the world in that like Mary and in her form, it is the place where God dwells and the means of recreating creatures through bringing them into union with Christ. This section focuses on how the Church is the sign of grace in Mary’s form as Virgin and Mother.²⁵⁰

1.1 Church as sign of what grace is accomplishing in the world

The Church is a sacrament of communion of God with man and of unity among all men (LG1). The Church thus *makes present* God’s divine life and mission. Integral to her identity as sign is her instrumental mission. Thus Her presence is not a mere static presence but is *active* through its very nature as communion in order to bring all humanity to share in it. Thus wherever God’s divine life is present within the world, there the Church is also *at work* transforming creation. Schillebeeckx writes that the way the universe grows towards Christ is the way the Church grows. Thus he points out that there is no realization of Christ’s kingdom without the Church or outside her.²⁵¹ The Church reveals the world’s true nature to herself²⁵² because she *is* the world’s true nature.

²⁵⁰ See Henri de Lubac for a detailed discussion drawing on the Fathers on how Our Lady is like the Church, in *The Splendour of the Church* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 256-260. I would say more than this: that Mary is the *form* of the Church and that the Church takes on her *form*.

²⁵¹ Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Church and Mankind,” *Concilium* No. 1 (1965): 44.

²⁵² “The Church is a sign in and for the world that reveals the world to itself.” Schillebeeckx, *Approaches Theologiques*, 64-65 and 68-71.

1.2. The Church as Virgin

The Church is virginal in relation to Christ, in a way that cannot be separated from her spousalhood or motherhood.²⁵³ As virginal she is totally *receptive* and is given to Christ in order to be filled exclusively with his divine life as virgin-bride. *Lumen Gentium* also sees the Church's virginity in terms of keeping the purity of the faith in its entirety. It then links this aspect of Church to her spousal nature, which involves the promise to her Bridegroom not to defile the purity of the faith. Hence the Church is only Bride if she is also Virgin as she can only unite herself to Christ if she has completely preserved all that he has entrusted to her of himself.²⁵⁴ Through this spousal union the Church remains virgin-mother and demonstrates hence that "all her fruitfulness comes from him."²⁵⁵ It is because of her exclusive and total self-giving to Christ alone that she remains *always* holy, since Christ is always holy.

1.3. The Church as Mother

The Church's Motherhood is the very gift of Christ to his Mother at the foot of the Cross of her spiritual motherhood of the new creatures in Christ which is both universal and at the same time personal. At the same time the Church's spiritual mothering can only be explored in light of Mary's own relations of receptivity and self-giving to her Son as outlined in the previous chapter. The Church's motherhood also applies to the relationship between Mother Church and local churches and communion between them can be defended in light of Mary's motherhood. In this section I will examine these aspects of the Church's motherhood

1.3.1. Mary, Mother of the Living

Mary is mother of Christ, and of men; Mother of the Redeemer and of the Redeemed.²⁵⁶ Hence she is not mother merely in a private or a biological way.²⁵⁷ While her physical motherhood is *personal*, as it extends to the Church in a spiritual

²⁵³ See Henri De Lubac for detailed insights from the Fathers of the Church on this theme, in *The Splendour of the Church*, 245.

²⁵⁴ LG 64.

²⁵⁵ See Hosea 14:9.

²⁵⁶ See Oliver Treanor, *Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Redeemed*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1988).

²⁵⁷ Rahner writes that Mary's motherhood is not "a mere biological occurrence," nor is it confined to "her private life-history." Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 13.

way it becomes *universal*.²⁵⁸ Yet Mary's motherhood becomes universal at a *personal* level in that her relationship with each son or daughter of God in the Church is as personal as that which she had with her own Son and is "a gift which Christ himself makes personally to every individual"²⁵⁹ in the Church. *Redemptoris Mater* compares the motherhood of Mary and her individual attention to each of her children to motherhood in the natural sphere, where no matter how many children a woman has, "her personal relationship with each of them is the very essence of motherhood."²⁶⁰ In other words Mary's motherhood is not divided so that each child receives part or aspects of it, but rather every element of her mothering is lavished on each person of the Church. I would argue that if Mary's motherhood of her Son is the Church's model, this *surpasses* the attention of an earthly image of motherhood. The motherhood of the Church then shares in the *fullness* of Mary's motherhood *personally* forming ecclesial persons to live a unique life in relation to Christ. Pope John Paul II wrote that through living the mystery of Mary's motherhood, the Church is "living her redemptive mystery in its life-giving fullness."²⁶¹ The Church takes on Mary's motherly role of nurturing and educating, leading her children to communion with the life-giving Trinitarian God.

Gerald Manly Hopkins captures poetically this mystery of Mary's dual motherhood, of Christ and of humanity in a way that emphasises how the Eternal Word born of Mary continues to take flesh from his creatures in a new way.²⁶² Hopkins in this short verse sums up the mystery of the ongoing continuous Incarnation of Christ in the world through those in the Church ("she shall yet conceive him, morning, noon and eve"). As Christ is born through them, they become "new selves, nobler human beings." When this work is done in each person it adds to Christ's glory and expands his identity ("and each one more makes... both God and Mary's son").

"of her he took our flesh:

²⁵⁸ Hans Von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord*, vol. 1. (T&T Clark, 1982), 421 in Charles Smith, "Mary in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 147

²⁵⁹ RM 45.

²⁶⁰ RM 45. The encyclical also makes the point that this personal attentiveness of Mary to those in the Church is the reason why Mary's her motherhood is "expressed in the singular, in reference to one man: "Behold your Son."

²⁶¹ RH 22.

²⁶² Which Agnes Cunningham describes as twofold, yet, one in its purpose. See Agnes Cunningham, "Mary's Faith: The Supreme, Abiding Gift of the Holy Spirit," *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998): 284.

He does take fresh and fresh,
 though much the mystery how,
 Not flesh but spirit now
 And makes, O marvellous!
 New Nazareth in us
 Where she shall yet conceive
 Him, morning, noon and eve:
 New Bethlems, and he born
 There, evenin, noon and morn...
 Who, born so, comes to be
 New self and nobler me
 In each one and each one
 More makes when all is done,
 Both God and Mary's Son."²⁶³

As Hopkins describes, Christ gives Mary as spiritual mother to those in the Church ("he makes new Nazareths in us where she shall yet conceive him"). This identity was the sign foreshadowed at Cana. There Christ addressed his own Mother as "woman," hinting that his relationship to her was more than at the biological level, but that she would one day be the representative woman as he would be the archetypal man. Thus as Mother of the living, Mary forms ecclesial persons in relation to her Son through his gift of resurrected life which transforms earthly identities. It is at the foot of the Cross that she becomes mother of the living through sharing in Christ's victory over suffering, sin and death.²⁶⁴ Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity recognised Mary's motherly role to form persons as sacraments of Christ among their fellow human beings.²⁶⁵

This mothering analogy could also be applied to the relationship between the *Mother Church* of Rome and the local churches. Each local church is "mothered" in the same complete way to benefit from the fullness of the Church's motherhood through the same sacraments, the same interpretation of the Word and the same orders. Precisely since each local church receives *the fullness of life from the Mother*, hence each one itself is life-giving and brings forth *the whole Christ* in every

²⁶³ Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air We Breathe," in *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manly Hopkins*, introduction and notes by W.H. Gardner (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1953), 56 in *Ibid*.

²⁶⁴ "Suffering, redefines her being in relation to her Son." Oliver Treanor, *Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Redeemed*, 65.

²⁶⁵ "This Mother of grace will form my soul so that her little child will be a living, 'striking' image of her first-born, the Son of the Eternal, he who was the perfect praise of his Father's glorify." Elizabeth of the Trinity, *Complete Works*, 141, in Borriello, Luigi, *Spiritual Doctrine of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity* (New York: Alba House, 1986), 30.

Eucharistic celebration. The Motherhood of the Church thus brings about unity between her children scattered in many nations.²⁶⁶ When this reality is applied at an anthropological level to ecclesial persons it also highlights that individuals from every local church have the capacity to bear *Christ in his fullness* and not merely “part of Christ.”

1.3.2. Motherhood of the Church: a personalising role

God entrusts the personalising role to the Church as part of her motherly identity as life-giver, and protector of everything to do with human life.²⁶⁷ It is by bringing individuals into contact with Christ and his divine eternal life through the sacraments that the Church carries out her personalising role. The more the individual receives and shares in divine eternal life, through Christ, the more he/she becomes a *person* whose role transcends a merely biological one.²⁶⁸ Through the call to holiness and the grace to respond to God, man thus comes to know himself and the fullness of his human identity.²⁶⁹

The Church as Mother knows individuals not as anonymous units in a collective but by their “new name” in Christ.²⁷⁰ Hence each is called *separately* but *together* in Christ with a unique role to play as part of the body.²⁷¹ Paradoxically, the closer people come to be through their personalisation in Christ within the Church’s communion, the more their unique identity expands.²⁷² Within her communion the

²⁶⁶ Hence the Petrine Ministry often portrayed merely in its hierarchical and external dimensions is in its essence a task of *shepherding* which is also a *motherly* role in order that Christ be fully brought to birth in each local Church. The motherly role is also one of just discipline so that each local church like a child realises that while it is worthy of the Mother Church’s complete attention that this does not allow it to claim a more superior or inferior position to the others and that if it *is* disciplined that it is no less loved.

²⁶⁷ “She (the Church) maintains among us, those things that are so endangered: respect for life and death, the sense of fidelity in love, the sacred character of the family; she maintains them as only a mother can. From birth to the grave, she envelops our life in her vast sacramentary structure.” De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 156.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 154. De Lubac writes, “Henceforth man, adorer of the divine Trinity within which he has been inserted, knows he exists with an existence that participates in God’s absoluteness. He is not longer completely immersed in earthly society or in the cosmos.”

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.* De Lubac speaks of how it is “through his divine vocation” (his call to blessedness) that man comes to know himself. God increasingly *personalises* the one who receives the revelation of this divine life.”

²⁷⁰ Hans von Balthasar, *Theo Drama Vol III: The Person in Christ*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), 207.

²⁷¹ See LG 9. He (God) has willed to make men holy and save them not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness.”

²⁷² De Lubac compares the type of community found in the Church to that of society. In a ‘mechanised society’ the closer the community, the more it traps those part of it and constrains their flourishing. In

Church preserves the personal life of her members, with “both gentleness and strictness.”²⁷³ This personalising of the Church as a communion must be protected from the *depersonalising* effect of society. Society often cannot balance collectivity and individuality. By overstressing collectivity it often oppresses individual initiative or on the other hand by exalting creativity it risks a disruption of communion through heightened individualism. The Church by contrast is *not* a collective where individuals conform with each other, but a *communion* in the image of the Trinity, where unity is composed by a harmony of unique persons.

Just as Mary’s maternal role was linked to her journey of faith as pilgrim-person in the midst of the world and creation,²⁷⁴ so too the Church as mother experiences this pilgrimage of faith, trusting that God works out his recreation of the world through her. This motherly role thus continues until the Church encompasses all creation.²⁷⁵ Mary’s coronation is the sign that her motherhood has come to fulfilment: she is now mother of *all creation and of all creatures*. Her glorification as Queen reveals to the world that all humankind are destined for the Kingdom. As such, her Queenship is the prophetic sign of eschatological fullness of communion.

In addition to being sign, the Church is also an instrument of communion and realises her prophetic mission of the recapitulation of creation, both explicitly and implicitly. Therefore like Mary the Church is the sacrament of Christ. When the world learns the sacred signs and symbols of the Church and many are baptised, recapitulation takes the form of “*sacralisation*” of the world.²⁷⁶ At the same time, when the Church opens to the world and finds Christ wherever self-giving love is present, then recapitulation takes the form of the “*secularisation*” of the Church.²⁷⁷ While the world will never become fully *sacralised* nor the Church *secularised*, both

the Church by contrast “the more closely the web is woven, the more it allows us to expand”. De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 156.

²⁷³Ibid., 158.

²⁷⁴ While containing the fullness of relationship to Christ as other, she nevertheless had to journey through the world, even experiencing the darkness of physical separation from her Son. Her loss of him as a child for three days, before finding him in the Temple foreshadowed her loss of him physically on the cross only to find him again in a new way through his Resurrection.

²⁷⁵ Cecily Boulding compares the Church’s maternal role to that of Mary, which “continues uninterrupted until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect.” Cecily Boulding, “The Holy Spirit and Mary in Vatican II” in William Mc Loughlin and Jill Pinnock, *Mary for Heaven and Earth* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2002), 142.

²⁷⁶ In its extreme form such as the creation of a political Christendom this is not a positive recapitulation.

²⁷⁷ I have chosen the words *implicitly* and *explicitly* to explain Schillebeeckx’s thought. See Schillebeeck, “The Church and Mankind,” 48.

these movements work in harmony so that the Church realises herself and her mission as sacrament to the world. It also reveals that as sacrament to the world, the Church is at work outside her visible boundaries. This dual form of recapitulation corresponds to Mary's nature as sacrament, not only bringing *Christ* into the *world* (as mother) but bringing the *world* into *Christ* (since due to her "yes" all human beings can potentially receive Christ and share in divine Trinitarian life).

1.4 The Church-as Bride

The facility to be spouse, is given to the Church through Mary as the Church takes on her form of self-giving and her co-redemptive suffering love for her Son. The Church is that place of communion with Christ within the realm of creation, which could be described as the nuptial chambers of the Bride and Bridegroom. Yet the Church only has this identity through Mary in whose body God first dwelt.²⁷⁸ The Church is not only collectively the spouse of Christ, but individuals in the Church are spouses and hence personal, nuptial signs of communion with Christ.²⁷⁹

Paradoxically just as Mary is Spouse because of her virginity, (as we have said since her bridal relationship to Christ is on the level of the deepest spiritual self-giving),²⁸⁰ so the Church who, becoming more like the Virgin, at the same time grows to resemble the Bride, hence becomes more like Christ and thereby more like God. The Church's identity is thus based on a spiritual understanding of spousality and hence she will always point away from herself to the one who gives her life.²⁸¹ As we

²⁷⁸ See John Saward, *Redeemer in the Womb*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 54. Here Saward comments on the patristic understanding of the Virgin's womb as the chamber of divine nuptials. Here he is referring in particular to St. Augustine in *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 44, 3; CCSL 38, 495. Saward also quotes Augustine when he says that "the Child Bridegroom came forth from his chamber, that is, the virginal womb, with his Mother's virginity unharmed" (Sermo 191, 1, 2; PL 38, 1010).

²⁷⁹ Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality", 279. Schindler highlights that finite creaturely being is constituted in relation to God. By virtue of being creature, all creaturely actions are creative only through their being initiatives "from, in-, and with-the other". It is this relationship that makes all creaturely action "constitutively symbolic and nuptial"

²⁸⁰ *Redemptoris Mater* emphasises the virginal element of Mary's spousal relationship to Christ and thus the Church in imitation of her "remains the virgin faithful to her spouse." It emphasises this only as an image of the total self-giving that is needed for Mary's motherhood in order that it be completely fruitful RM 43 Virginal Motherhood is the source of motherhood in and through the Holy Spirit, in which ecclesial persons will share.

²⁸¹ Charles Journet describes these profound paradoxes: "The more the Church resembles the Virgin, the more she becomes Bride; and the more she becomes Bride, the more she resembles the Bridegroom; and the more she resembles the Bridegroom, the more she resembles God. These superimposed moments between the Church and God are but transparencies through which the unique splendour of God is reflected." See *L'Église du Verbe Incarné*, II, (Paris: 1962), 428-436; cf 393: "Marie est la réalisation la plus pure et la plus intense de L'Église," in Ignace de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 229.

have seen with Mary, her virginal receptivity of God's fullness²⁸² and her sharing in Christ's self-giving "yes" to the Father enabled the fullness of her personal self-giving as Bride.²⁸³ This Virgin-Bride paradox also describes the Church's identity, who as completely virginal and yet, as the Bride of Christ, is totally constituted through her relationship to Christ as spouse and other.

Thus Mary typifies the Church in her bridal and receptive co-operation with the work of the God-Man.²⁸⁴ Just as Christ is sustained at his passion by the consent of Mary suffering with him, so in his redemptive mission to recapitulate the world, he is sustained by his co-suffering spouse – the Church. Christ needs his Bride in the economy in order to love, suffer, give himself and to complete his work of redemption. His own loving dependence on his Bride's sustenance is most perfectly manifested each time he en-trusts himself to the hands of the Church in his Eucharistic self-giving. Through the Eucharist the Church as Bride returns to her Spouse the perfect love he has given to her. In the gift of the Eucharist hence, the *Bridegroom* himself expands his Bride's capacity to love."²⁸⁵ Thus the Church is only *personalised* as Bride and spouse through the Eucharistic offering back to her Spouse. This mutual self-giving of Christ and the Church continues at every memorial banquet of the Lord's sacrifice in every local church, to unite the Bride ever more fully to her Bridegroom.²⁸⁶ Spousal union occurs at a *personal* level between Christ and each person who receives his Eucharistic body yet in a way which unites individuals in "the Bride" to constitute their self-gift in return. During the Eucharistic celebration, the spousal identity of each ecclesial person is particularly manifested and each returns to the Bridegroom the fullness of the sacrificial love which he has given to

²⁸² Purity and hence virginity is less to do with exteriors, than with the interior of a person's being. Mk 7:15 states "Nothing that goes into someone from outside can make that person unclean; it is the things that come out of someone that makes that person unclean." Hence virginity is pure not because it is an abstaining from something, but rather because it is a fullness of God and thus the person does not want to be in a sense "filled by another."

²⁸³ The Church as Bride is faithful since she shares in Christ's yes to the Father. Through his Spirit, Christ himself brings about the constant faithfulness of his Bride. He takes her up into his own faithfulness to the will of the Father, and calls forth in the Church the echo of his own 'Amen'." see Jan Groot, "The Church as Sacrament of the World," *Concilium* No. 4, (1968), 27.

²⁸⁴ Otto Semmelroth, *Mary, Archetype of the Church* (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1963), 128.

²⁸⁵ Marc Ouellet, "Trinity and Eucharist: A Covenantal Mystery," *Communio* 27 (Summer 2000): 280.

²⁸⁶ MD 26. Pope John Paul II writes that Christ gives, "in the most complete way, through a complete gift of self" in his body given and his blood, poured out (Lk 22:19-20). In this way, "he loves to the end"(Jn13:1) and this fullness of self-giving is made present at every Eucharist. Here he also mentions that the Cross reveals the spousal meaning of God's love and that the Eucharist is "the sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride."

them,²⁸⁷ not only through praise and thanksgiving but through the witness of a “Eucharistic life” which begins in service of others.²⁸⁸

2.0. ECCLESIAL PERSONS: VIRGINS, BRIDES, MOTHERS AND SACRAMENTS OF CHRIST

The mystery of how creatures share in Mary’s receptive, nuptial and fruitful form to constitute them in relation to Christ is revealed through the idea of Mary as a representative type. New creatures share in Mary’s identity precisely through sharing in the Church’s collective identity as Virgin-Mother and Spouse in relation to Christ and which they now represent at a personal level in their own beings as sacramental signs of Christ. Thus as this section outlines, individuals are personally and separately constituted in relation to Christ but yet *along with others in the communion* (through sharing the form of Mary’s corporate personality represented by the Church).

2.1. The person of Mary reveals the “Mystery of the One and the Many” in the Church

Mary is the figure of the Church since she represents the Church’s holiness and is the model of all those in the Church called to holiness.²⁸⁹ She reveals her sanctity through her union with Christ: simultaneously as Virgin, Mother and Spouse, thereby manifesting relationships in the new order of creation. As we have seen, Mary represents more than the Church as a collective person, but also *the Church as expressed by persons within her*. Thus Mary represents those in the Church in relation to Christ (and thus in her form) whom he has redeemed *personally* within the collective. Christ has “given himself up for the many”(Mk14:24), yet not without giving himself out of love for each one individually.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Von Balthasar writes, at the Eucharist “we are drawn into his attitude of self-giving and thus into his sacrificial attitude.” See Hans Von Balthasar, “Mary-Office-Church,” in *Communio* 23 (Spring 1996): 197.

²⁸⁸ The essence of the Eucharistic understanding of person as a giver of self in service to others is seen in Jn. 13, where the Eucharistic institution is replaced by the washing of the feet. This is the sign that Christ’s sacrificial giving of himself at the Eucharist and on the cross is to be practiced in the midst of life through love of neighbour.

²⁸⁹ John Paul II, writes that Mary of Nazareth is the “figure of the Church, since she precedes everyone on the path to holiness; in her person.” He bases this on (Eph.5:27) which states that “the Church has already reached that perfection where she exists without spot or wrinkle.” See MD 27.

²⁹⁰ While Catholic Ecclesiology has always emphasised the collective element of Redemption (which is certainly true), it seems to have neglected the corresponding emphasis on the fact of Christ’s redemption for each one *personally*, perhaps because this has been claimed by Protestant ecclesial communities as the *only* way of Redemption. In a lecture given by Raniero Cantalamessa in St.

While portraying the *Church* as Virgin and Mother, Blessed Isaac of Stella draws the inevitable theological conclusion that the mystery of the Church is composed of *many* ecclesial persons, both in the form of Christ as Son and in Mary's form as virgin and mother.

Christ, head and Body is One-whole and unique, but this one Christ is of one God in heaven and one mother on earth. This Christ is both many sons and one Son. For as the head and Body are one Son and many Sons, so Mary and the Church are one mother and many-one virgin and many.²⁹¹

He concludes that what is said in general of the Virgin-Mother the Church, is said individually of the Virgin Mary and what is said in the particular case of the Virgin-Mother Mary is rightly understood of the Virgin Mother Church universally.²⁹²

2.1.1. "Virgins"

Thus every faithful soul, spouse of the Word of God, mother, daughter and sister of Christ is understood to be a "virgin" with her own form of fertility. Here Blessed Isaac mentions the paradox - it is the virgin who is fruitful. For the Church and ecclesial persons in the Church, fruitfulness comes from being "virginal" which means being freed from self in order to surrender to Christ in the form of Mary's receptivity. Only then are ecclesial persons recreated through a reception of their beings back from him. "Virgins" in the Church are thus the fertile soil necessary for the seed of the fruit-bearing Christ. This pattern of receptivity and fruitfulness is continuously worked out in and through all the relationships he/she holds with those who are other to him.

Patrick's College Maynooth, in May 2002, this neglect of the "personal" was noted and correcting it was seen as an urgent element of the "new evangelisation." The reality of a personal call from the Lord, is for every baptised member of the Church. The new Ecclesial movements especially underscore this truth and also show that a truly personal relationship with Christ does not lead them to a false autonomy but in fact a greater desire for true community. Theirs is truly a Trinitarian and ecclesial identity and is a sign within the communion of the Church calling her to live her own Trinitarian identity so that she becomes an evermore perfect sign and instrument of salvation for the world.

²⁹¹ Isaac of Stella, *Sermo* 5, Advent Sat. Wk 2 in *Divine Office Vol 1*, (London: Collins, 1974), 94-95

²⁹² *Sermo* 51

2.1.2. “Brides”

Becoming spousal is about more than simply giving oneself in fullness to another, but actually about *representing* that other. In the same way that human spouses are unique and yet each in their individuality points to the presence of their *spouse* as other, similarly in the Church, spousal persons, are unique, yet each is a sign of the one Christ. While there are many brides in the Church each *shares* in Mary’s spousality as the one Bride of the one Bridegroom. Christ in his unique self-giving identity is most himself in the fullness of his self-giving to Mary the one Bride.²⁹³ Mary’s spousal love in return shares in the depths of Christ’s own self-giving to her.²⁹⁴ The same applies to the Church as the one spouse of Christ. She is the one “spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb”(Rev 19:7). She it is whom Christ “loved and for whom he delivered himself up that he might sanctify her” (Eph. 5:26).²⁹⁵

All persons are called to holiness through the possibility of this unique spousal relationship to Christ in the Church through the Holy Spirit, the bond of communion and love, enabling them to respond to the love of the Bridegroom with a complete gift of self.²⁹⁶ The union of Christ with his Bride the Church is seen as the model of how Christ gives himself spousally to *each individual soul* within his Body.²⁹⁷ Since Christ himself is Bridegroom and Spouse, he asks them to be his spouse *in his image*

²⁹³ The full self-giving between Christ and Mary revealed in the economic sphere first as that between mother and Son points to the transcendent sphere where relationships in the Kingdom are constituted not by biology but by water and the Holy Spirit. Hence as Virgin-Mother Mary is also in the spiritual categories of the Kingdom. See LG 57, which speaks of the union between the mother and son in the context of the role of the Blessed Virgin in the plan of salvation.

²⁹⁴ See Leahy who speaks of how the human analogy of Bride and Bridegroom cannot help us completely understand the relationship between Mary and Christ in these categories since he says that in human terms the Bride is a “separate person with a freedom and self-surrender which he does not create.” In the case of Christ, “the Woman who precedes him and is his helpmate is generated as his Bride by his extraordinary act of self-surrender and generation in the Paschal Mystery.” Leahy, *The Marian Profile of the Church*, 56. I would disagree with Leahy here (and Von Balthasar) in that *every* “spouse” is only spouse due to the self-giving of the other to him which calls from him his own self-giving (albeit in a human way). Hence in a sense, all free self-giving and self-surrender is “created” by another. Mary as spouse is representative here not of female brides within a marriage but of persons in the Church. What we learn from Mary is that *every person in the Church* can only give himself to Christ, because he first shares in Christ’s own self-giving to him.

²⁹⁵ See LG 6. Also here “it is she whom, once purified, he willed to be joined to himself, subject in love and fidelity (Eph. 5:24).

²⁹⁶ *Mulieris Dignitatem* makes the point that all human beings—women and men are called “through the Church to be the Bride of Christ, the Redeemer of the world. MD 25.

²⁹⁷ In *Redemptoris Hominis*, Pope John Paul speaks of how the union of Christ with his Bride the Church is seen as the model of how Christ gives himself spousally to *each individual soul* within his Body.

(*sharing in his own self-giving*), but *analogously* and reciprocally in the form of Bride.²⁹⁸

Modern man however is not comfortable with the idea of self-surrender, much less with the idea that in one's *uniqueness*, one in some way points to another. Hence the contemporary mind is less comfortable with the reality of marriage. The struggle for man today is to hold onto his unique subjectivity at all costs even if it means disregarding the truth of his human nature, which calls him to communion with another. He experiences a constant tension between surrendering himself to subjectivity or to objectivity.²⁹⁹ When he entrusts his individuality to the unique individuality of God however, he finds his very *subjectivity*, which surpasses his finite conceptions of his own uniqueness.³⁰⁰

From the moment of her own conception without sin, in the sign of her virginal-motherhood and in her complete self-giving at the cross,³⁰¹ Mary is a *nuptial* sign because she points to *Christ* as her sanctifier.³⁰² Similarly the Church as Bride

²⁹⁸ Kevin Mc Namara notes that since "Christ looks to every member (Rom. 12:4-8; 1Cor.12) of his body to fulfil his own unique role to the fullest possible measure" in *The Church as the Sacrament of Salvation* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1976), 57. Since he is Bridegroom and spouse, he asks them to be his spouse too in his image, but in the form of Bride.

²⁹⁹ Maritain sees that if man abandons to his subjectivity, he becomes the very centre of the world, where everything is absorbed into himself and everything is sacrificed to his own uniqueness he is left with his own solitude and his longing for death, when faced with his corruptibility. See *Existence and the Existent*, 78. He also writes on the other hand that if man abandons himself to objectivity, he becomes absorbed into the world. *Ibid.*, 75.

³⁰⁰ On this point, see the homily of Pope Benedict XVI for the Mass for the Inauguration of his pontificate. Building on the theme of GS22 and also Pope John Paul's expansion of this theme in many of his Christocentric encyclicals, Pope Benedict re-echoes Pope John Paul's words to young people "Do not be afraid! Open the doors wide for Christ!" In commenting on this he says "the Pope was speaking to everyone, especially the young. Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we *open ourselves totally to him*, are we not afraid that he might take something *from us*? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? No! If we let Christ into our lives, *we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great*. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation" (emphasis mine).

³⁰¹ Parades writes that Mary was called by God to give life to Jesus, the first seed of the Kingdom. "After her free acceptance, the Spirit produced in her an authentic creation, a new world, a new people (Mt1: 1-18)

³⁰² Von Balthasar describes the nuptial character of the New Bride as holy with the holiness of her Spouse in contrast to the understanding of Bride in the Old Covenant as faithful with her own faithfulness. The difference between the spouse or bride of the Old Testament based on the personal faithfulness of the covenant parties and the new bride who must be as holy as the Sanctifier and made holy by him. The New Bride is to be one-flesh with the Bridegroom and will accomplish an "incarnation analogous to the Incarnation of God's Word." This is the Bride's nuptial character, to reveal Christ through her holiness, which glorifies the Bridegroom. See Hans Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord, vol. 1* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 43; 60

also has a *nuptial* character in Mary's form, glorifying her spouse by reflecting back the love, which he has bestowed on her. In the same way only in Christ can human beings discover the nuptial mystery of their physical body, which becomes a personal expression of their spousal communion with Christ. Hence they are signs revealing the destiny of *all* men.

In surrender to Christ, men also share in the *mission* of Christ and of the Church. Each person shares in Christ's subjectivity, his Sonship, which is at the same time an objective essence.³⁰³ Hence within Christ's Body, each one is an adopted son or daughter of God. This identity is *objective* in that they all reflect the one Christ yet subjective as each manifests his/her own specific form of sonship through a *personal* form of self-giving. Each person in the Church hence has his own distinct part to play in the communion of the Body of Christ (1Cor 12:12-30).³⁰⁴ The Holy Spirit fashions this personal identity rooted in Christ by forging the link between objectivity and subjectivity. This is because the Spirit is both the *life principle* of God³⁰⁵ transforming human nature by bringing it into communion with Christ and at the same time is the *personal principle* through whom an individual finds complete subjective identity as a son or daughter of God. Mary as the spouse of the Spirit reveals that personal identity is dynamically constituted in the Spirit to preserve subjectivity and freedom.³⁰⁶

The spousal love which each person in the Church gives to the Bridegroom is actually a share in Christ's own spousal love for them, which they have received in the Eucharist and which Mary has already permanently appropriated. Through receiving Holy Communion, their human nature shares in a type of *perichoresis* with Christ analogous to that which exists in the immanent Trinity. *Mulieris Dignitatem* highlights that "being bride" and thus the "feminine element" of the Church also

³⁰³ Christ is true person, at once subjective and objective in that his personhood is his essence, since he has overcome sin and death, the tendency of human nature towards corruptibility.

³⁰⁴ Kevin Mc Namara outlines the tension and "mutual exchange" between the individual call and the community call. He says that the call is primarily to the community and yet there is a personal call received, not subordinated to that of the community. The "Body of Christ", the Church alleviates the tension where each member has meaning only in the context of the entire body, yet the Body precisely needs the particular service of each individual member of the community. Kevin Mc Namara, *The Church as Sacrament of Salvation*, 56-57.

³⁰⁵ In the book of Ezekiel, the Spirit is the one who will raise the people to new life (Ez. 37: 1-14).

³⁰⁶ The ecclesial mystic Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, expressed this well in her prayer. The Holy Spirit was for Elizabeth one who was to 'come down on her' and to overshadow her, in the image of her mother. This would be a continual process, expressed as it is in her prayer: "Come down on me (Spirit) and reproduce in me and incarnation of the word, that he may be to me a superadded humanity wherein he may renew his mystery...".

This idea is found in contemporary theology and yet can be traced back to the Church Fathers.³⁰⁹ All Christians are called to represent the Church's motherhood,³¹⁰ sharing both in the generativity of God in the immanent sphere and that of Mary in the economic.³¹¹ It is precisely Mary's motherly role continued through the Church that brings ecclesial persons to be mothers, in a way only possible due to her *physical*, historical childbearing accompanied and preceded by her *spiritual* motherhood.³¹² Saward writes, "Mary mothers us into mothering Christ."³¹³ As each of the faithful becomes a 'mother' in union with every other person in the Church, so this work of mothering is the role of the "whole Church."³¹⁴ As the relationships of the Kingdom have been transformed from merely biological ones, thus all those who hear the Word of God and keep it are now mothers, sisters and brothers of Jesus.³¹⁵ Christians receive Christ in Mary's form through their reception of the Word and the Sacraments of the Church. Thus sharing in Mary's fruitfulness, they enflesh the Word through living out the nuptial meaning of their bodies.³¹⁶

³⁰⁹ St. Francis de Sales and John XXIII are more contemporary writers who express the same profound mystical truth. De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 82.

³¹⁰ De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 83. Clement of Alexandria having spoken of the perfect ones in Christ who are all the more 'little children', he goes on to reunite them all in a "single virgin become mother-whom I love to call the Church."

³¹¹ De Lubac outlines how in the Middle Ages in the West, saw in the three Masses said at Christmas the "symbol of the three births of the Word." He describes the first birth as "the eternal birth in the bosom of the Father", the second birth as "historical birth from the womb of the Virgin as a result of his Incarnation" and the third birth, the fruit of the second, "his spiritual birth in the womb of the Christian soul." De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 80.

³¹² Saward, *Redeemer in the Womb*, 115.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Just like there are many Brides inserted into the one Bride of Christ, so there are many mothers sharing in the one motherhood of Christ. This one Bride and one Mother is the Church. It is thus the whole Church who brings forth Christ and is spouse to him. Ecclesial persons share in that albeit in their own unique and personal way. Since each ecclesial person fully represents the Church, thus each makes present the *fullness of being Bride and mother* to Christ.

³¹⁵ Lk. 11: 28; RM 20.

³¹⁶ The grace that Mary received as Mother of God is available to persons in the Church when they receive his word, let it abide in them and keep the commandments. This role of giving birth to Christ comes about through receiving the Word, which bears fruit. Origen writes: "the soul which has received the seed of the Word forms this received Word within her until she herself gives birth to the spirit of the fear of God." Origen, In Levit., hom. 12, c.7 (Baehrens, 466) in De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 81. See also John Saward on Origen, "in and through the Church the believer is a mother to Christ. The individual Christian is called to become what the Church as a whole is, Christ's Bride and Mother, a truly ecclesiastical soul. Here Saward is also commenting on Origen: "What good is it to you if Christ came once in the flesh if he does not also come to your soul? Let us pray that his advent may daily take place in us, so that we can say, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." *Homiliae in Lucam* 22, 1 in John Saward, *Redeemer in the Womb*, 108. See also Hugo Rahner, *Symbole der Kirche: Die Ekklesiologie der Vater* (Otto Müller: Salzburg, 1964), 32. Rahner notes how individual souls become mothers of Christ (or Word-bearers) in a way analogous to how Mary gives birth to Christ through the Holy Spirit. Both the womb of the Church and the womb of the individual soul become fruitful. "So soll auch die Kirche und damit auch die einzelne Seele, gleich

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity recognised that in Mary's form she was called to be a mother of Christ not just through giving birth to him in her own life but helping to bring him to birth in the lives of others. She exemplifies how those *in* the Church share in the personalising role of the Church's motherhood,³¹⁷ as both *sign* and *instrument*. Elizabeth was aware that this call inevitably entails sharing in Christ's redemptive suffering³¹⁸ as the self-gift of motherhood is only fully lived through sacrifice. As we have seen, the Church entrusts Christ to anyone who does the will of the Father³¹⁹ by giving themselves to others in self-gift. Yet paradoxically this gift of self firstly entails receiving Christ "as a child" which I will equate with Mary's virginal receptive form.³²⁰ Only in this form is there openness and humility making room for the Spirit to enable self-gift and ultimate fruitfulness.

These two corresponding means of the Church's being sacrament to the world are manifested at the *micro-personal level* in the lives of *ecclesial persons*.³²¹ Consecrated religious in the Church are called to "bring their interior relationship with God" to fulfilment in *sacral* forms,³²² witnessing as a sign of the eschatological fullness of ecclesial persons. The Laity by contrast express their interior relationship to God primarily in *secular* forms, building up the kingdom of God in the world through permeating it like salt and leaven.³²³ But all persons, whatever their state of life are called to be mothers bringing the Kingdom to birth in the world.

Just as the virgin conceiving the Christ was the sign of the *new times* (1s 7:14) and the woman at the foot of the Cross becomes the Mother of the Church (Jn 19: 26),

Maria "Logosträgerin" werden, den Logos in ihren Herzen gebären. Gott öffnet den Mutterschoß der Kirche und der Seele zu einer geheimnisvollen neugeburt."

³¹⁷ Elizabeth prays to Mary for the grace of being able, like her to "bring forth so many other Christs for the Church in order to glorify the Father in his creatures.

³¹⁸ As Borriello points out however, Elizabeth realised that to do this she "needed to associate herself with Mary's co-redemptive suffering for humanity. "Now that he has returned to the Father and substituted me for Himself on the Cross so that "I may suffer in my body what is lacking in His Passion for the sake of His Body, which is the Church", the Blessed Virgin is again there to teach me to suffer as he did... when I shall have said my "consummatum est.", it is again she who will lead me to the heavenly courts." Complete Works, 160-161 in Luigi Boriello, *Spiritual doctrine of Elizabeth of the Trinity*, 31-32.

³¹⁹ See Von Balthasar, *Theo Drama*, IV (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 397.

³²⁰ De Lubac notes that one must 'become like little children to enter the Kingdom of God' (Mt. 18:2-4; 19:14-15) and that this growth in spiritual childhood is a growth in the freedom of the Holy Spirit, in humility and in poverty. *The Motherhood of the Church*, 71

³²¹ Schillebeeckx does not use the terms *micro-personal* or *ecclesial person*.

³²² Schillebeeckx, "The Church and Mankind", 49.

³²³ *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 60. "Through their obedience to the Holy Spirit, Christians work together with their brothers and sisters in order to achieve and put to good use, everything that is good, noble and beautiful in the modern progress of civilisation, culture, science, technology and the other areas of thought and human activity." See also LG, 33 and GS, 43.

virginal receptive form.³²⁰ Only in this form is there openness and humility making room for the Spirit to enable self-gift and ultimate fruitfulness.

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Just as the virgin conceiving the Christ was the sign of the *new times* (1s 7:14) and the woman at the foot of the Cross becomes the Mother of the Church (Jn 19: 26), a sign of the *end times*, so the woman clothed with the sun (Rev 12) is the Mother of *all humanity* and the sign of *the end of time*. Until this sign is revealed as the recapitulation of all creatures to God, each ecclesial person becomes a sacrament "already" of this eternal life to come³²⁴ and through the task of "mothering," shares in the Church's mission to glorify Christ her spouse by bringing all creatures to find their dignity as sons of God.³²⁵

3.0.CONSTITUTION OF ECCLESIAL PERSONS

The form of God's communion with human persons is sacramental. Christ is the foremost sacrament of God and through the merits of his incarnation. Creatures now share in his divine life mediated through the Church and her sacramental life which

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³²⁴ See also St. Paul in Roms 8: 20-22 for the same idea of the children of God as a revelation of the plans of God. "For the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed. It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed upon it, but for the purpose of him who imposed it-with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God....the whole creation until this time, has been groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free."

³²⁵ See John Saward, *Redeemer in the Womb*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 106.

takes Mary's form of receptivity to God. This section focuses on the form of communion with Christ as the divinisation of man and the means to this communion through the sacraments in particular reference to those of Baptism, Eucharist and Marriage. It also explains how the Church's sacramentality, while in Mary's form of receptivity is a feminine form, but is one that is *humanising* as constitutive of new creatures. Hence through the sacramental life of the Church new creatures both male and female share in Mary's receptivity to God in order to share her fruitfulness manifested in lives of self-giving to others. Hence they in turn become sacraments of Christ and realise their humanity through this identity.

3.1. Communion with God as sacramental union

While man's identity as personal is realised in communion with God, at no stage does "divinisation" of man mean he is no longer a creature. While some theologians like Henri de Lubac³²⁶ emphasise communion with God in terms of faith and *participation*, other mystical writers like Ruusbroeck speak of man's *union* with God but are clear that this does not mean absorption of creaturely identity. Man does not *become* God.³²⁷ In St. John's Gospel this communion is expressed through God's indwelling in humanity³²⁸ and Ruusbroeck speaks of it as the "mystical rest" at the end of time, which has already begun in the present through *grace* in the life of the believer. This grace is revealed through the harmony of the person's life with God's

³²⁶ Henri De Lubac writes that the union between God and the soul in mysticism is "a matter of unification and not identification" and of "union and not absorption." Christian mysticism, or union with Christ is never complete union but "participation". Henri De Lubac, "Mystique et Mystere", in *Theologies D'Occasion*, 68 in Eric De Moulins-Beaufort, "The Spiritual Man in de Lubac," *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998): 287-302, 293. De Lubac points out that Christian mysticism, or union with Christ is an experience of *faith*-deeper union involves deeper faith not "a deepening of self" in Eric De Moulins-Beaufort, "The Spiritual Man in de Lubac," 294

³²⁷ Ruusbroeck sees that union with God involves dependency on God and abiding in him, but is never union in a way that individual identity is absorbed by God or destroyed. "This essential unity of our spirit with God does not exist in and of itself, but it abides in God, and it flows forth from God, and it depends on God, and it reverts into God as into its eternal cause, and, accordingly it neither parts from God nor will it ever do so. For this unity is in us in or bare nature." See *Die Geestelike Brulocht*, 468-75 (*The Spirituals Espousals and Other Works*, 116-118), in Frans Jozef Van Beeck, *God Encountered, A Contemporary Catholic Systematic Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 249

³²⁸ "Anyone who loves God will keep his commandments and we will come to him and make our home in him" (Jn 14:6-26). This is also expressed in the image of the vine and the branches. The believer is united to the life of God as the branches are to the vine; otherwise their life is barren (Jn15).

will.³²⁹ It is through the Holy Spirit that each individual to this end can appropriate and internalise the mystery of Christ in his intellect and will.³³⁰

3.2. Constitution of persons through the sacraments

Personal communion with God, which occurs through the Church, is analogous with Trinitarian *perichoresis*. Trinitarian persons are in communion because of their opposition (difference) and in the same way through reception of the sacraments, individuals are in communion with Christ, precisely because of their creaturely *difference* to him who is divine.³³¹ It is in their finite difference that they receive divine life in Christ sacramentally:³³² hence their dignity as *persons*. As we have seen, Mary is the model *par excellence* of the finite creature perfected in her openness to God's transcendence (yet not divinised). As the creature most open to the fullness of grace, she is the sign of God's work of personalisation or *recreation* whereby God's addresses us by a "new name" because we are in Christ.³³³ Through sacramental union with Christ, "innate non-identity is brought into an ever-closer approximation to perfect identity."³³⁴ Meyer speaks of the graced condition of self-identity rooted in God as a state of *achieved freedom*.³³⁵ Participating in God's life through *Christogenesis*, possible only through the Holy Spirit, man becomes a free autonomous person,³³⁶ and acquires a new power to act.³³⁷ This freedom comes from being drawn to make a continuous gift of themselves through sharing in the life of Christ that "hands itself over."³³⁸ In their self-gift to others they reveal their spiritual

³²⁹ See Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 249.

³³⁰ Eric De Moulins-Beaufort, "The Spiritual man in de Lubac", *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998) : 296

³³¹ I have already alluded to this union of differences in chapter one as "dual unity", rooted in the unity in difference of a) persons in the Trinity, b) the divine and human natures in Christ and c) male and female union.

³³² See LG 7.

³³³ "Person is the new name by which God addresses me." See Hans Von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord, Vol 3, Persons in Christ*, 208 in Ackermann, "The Church as Person," 247.

³³⁴ Ackermann, "The Church as Person", 247. See also the same idea addressed in Seward, *Redeemer in the womb*, 130. "In the Holy Virgin's womb, in her flesh and through her faith, God the Word penetrates to the deepest level of matter, to the embryonic 'ground sill of human existence, and makes it his own, raising it up to new excellence."

³³⁵ Charles Meyer, *A Contemporary Theology of Grace* (New York: St. Paul, 1971), 202.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of freedom, which can blow freely in individual lives (Jn3:8). See also Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 239 and Meyer, *A Contemporary Theology of Grace* 184, 185.

³³⁸ See Von Balthasar on insertion into the life that hands itself over, and praising God through their existence. In *Glory of the Lord*, Vol 1, 397. I have elaborated on this here.

communion with Christ.³³⁹ Acts of charity are the sign of the “flowering” of baptismal nobility of the sons and daughters of God³⁴⁰ showing that the commandment of love³⁴¹ can only be followed when they themselves are in Christ, in the Church.

Hence through the sacraments, individuals consummate their nuptial identities to become sacraments of Christ expressed in self-giving actions including liturgical worship. Schindler writes that: “creaturely being is structurally realised archetypically in the sacramental liturgy interpreted primarily through the theological *nuptiality* disclosed uniquely in Mary.”³⁴² By degrees, the human being is conformed to Christ³⁴³ through sharing in the merits of his life, death, Resurrection and glorification.³⁴⁴ This begins at Baptism and continues through life in the reception of other sacraments which correspond to the maturing person and accompany the natural stages of personal growth (such as adolescence, marriage, old age, and death).³⁴⁵ Thus from the very first stage the person shares *already* in Christ’s resurrected life, even if this must wait for the fulfilment of this union at the eschaton.³⁴⁶

While all of the sacraments point to the nuptial meaning of the person, I will explore this theme briefly in the context of Baptism, Eucharist and Marriage.

³³⁹ Through a life of sacramental union, persons in Christ reveal through acts of charity, that they have been “chosen in Christ, for the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1: 14). See *Redemptoris Mater* 7-8, on how Mary is the one who reveals in a unique way what it is to have been chosen and blessed in Christ. (Hence it is in her form that we are chosen).

³⁴⁰ Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 221.

³⁴¹ This is a very Johannine and sacramental depiction of Christian life. “It is to the glory of my Father that you will bear much fruit. Remain in my love. Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15: 8-10). The love Jesus wishes his disciples to bear witness to is his self-giving love, “No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15: 13), without living in Jesus, the disciples will not be able to love and thus will not sacramentally reveal him through self-giving love in relation to others. “Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; cut off from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15: 5).

³⁴² David Schindler, “Creation and Nuptiality,” in *Communio* 28 (Summer 2001): 293.

³⁴³ For St. Paul, man’s transformation in Christ, occurs primarily through Baptism where believers die, are buried with Christ and are baptised into his new life. Each individual becomes a new creature, sharing in the Eucharist and is transformed in a continuous way until the Lord’s return at the eschaton. Meyer, *A Contemporary Theology of Grace*, 44.

³⁴⁴ See Rom 6:8-11. Also see Meyer who writes: “the sacraments in John are the means by which Christians are incorporated into the saving work of Christ, sharing in the descent of the Redeemer to his death and in His ascent through death to glory, the glory he enjoyed with the Father before creation.” Meyer, *A Contemporary Theology of Grace*, 44.

³⁴⁵ Hans von Balthasar also stresses that man finds his personhood in Christ through a dying and rising. This happens through a necessary ex-proportion of man through becoming part of the Body of Christ and through which he finds or appropriates his new identity in Christ. See *Glory of the Lord* Vol 3, 406.

³⁴⁶ Edmund Fortman, *The Theology of Man and Grace* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), 40.

3.2.1. Baptism

In Baptism, the Christian dies with Christ in order to rise with him. This is the key to re-creation and is the form of Mary's life as model of the redeemed by grace. United to Christ, the person shares in Christ's victory over sin and death and continually finds new life in the risen Lord through his Holy Spirit.³⁴⁷ The Paraclete is given to believers as the "power to become children of God" (Jn1:12). This power is a "pledge of the incorruptible life which the risen Christ already enjoys,"³⁴⁸ making the eschaton present already in and through the life of believers. This is seen however imperfectly in the sign of their own unity, which is the seed of full communion at the end of time. Baptism is thus a dynamic sacrament whose effects are continually felt in the life of the ecclesial person.

3.2.2. Eucharist

Personalisation of individuals crystallises in the Eucharist since through reception of this sacrament, individuals share in Mary's reception of Christ, in Christ's eternal life and his own spousal self-giving.

Communion with Christ in the Eucharist is a *real* and actual communion,³⁴⁹ through which the person abides in Christ and Christ in him (Jn6: 54-56)³⁵⁰ in a way *analogous* to how Christ abides in the Father and the Father in Christ in the immanent Trinity.³⁵¹ There is such a "fusion of existences" between the creature and Christ in the Eucharistic life that the "individual I" is assimilated to the personal identity of Jesus in a way that almost "breaks through the lines of division."³⁵² Through sharing in Christ's Body and Blood the individual is "divinised" but never so that he loses his creaturely identity. The lines of separateness exist *precisely* in order to highlight the dignity of the *creature* that God chooses to dwell in who dwells in God's own life. The creature is no longer a servant but a "friend"(Jn 15:15) of God.

³⁴⁷ Irenaeus sees Baptism more as re-creation through the giving of the Spirit rather than through the remission of his sins Dem., 5; Adv. haer., III, 19, 1; in Fortman, *The Theology of Man and Grace*, 99.

³⁴⁸ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., V, 7, 1-2 (Harvey, II, 336-338).

³⁴⁹ See B. Cooke, "Eucharist, source or expression of Community?", *Worship* 40, No.6 (1966): 342.

³⁵⁰ J.F. Lescauwat, "Eucharistic Gathering and Church Community," *One in Christ* 3 (1967): 130.

³⁵¹ See Michael Figura on the work of Hilary of Potiers (De Trinitate 8.13 (CCL 62 A, 325ff) on the subject of individual union with Christ in the Eucharist. "We live in him in the same way as he lives in the Father." Figura, "Church and Eucharist in the Light of the Trinitarian Mystery," *Communio* 27 (Summer 2000): 231. I would qualify this by saying we live in Christ analogously to how he lives in the Father. Mary is the bridge between Christ and the Father. We approach the Father through Christ but in Mary's form as she is the first creature who approached the Father through Christ.

³⁵² Joseph, Cardinal Ratzinger, *Called to Communion. Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 37.

Eucharistic reception is the mode of communion with Christ which most approximates to *Mary's union with him* in her form as Virgin, Spouse and Mother, a mode which incidentally is most akin to the mutual union of Father and Son.³⁵³ This is why *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* likens Mary's reception of Christ to the ecclesial person's reception of the Eucharist.³⁵⁴ Mary represents the fullest physical and spiritual dignity of the creature in relation to God and similarly the person who is *eucharistised* realises their dignified integrated humanity.³⁵⁵ Hence Ouellet calls the Eucharist "the pneumatological and ecclesiological modality of the *Incarnation*."³⁵⁶ Just as the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary at the Annunciation when she conceived Christ, so the person who receives the Eucharist gives birth to Christ in an ongoing way through the power of that same Spirit so that individuals realise their humanity.³⁵⁷ Like Mary who proclaimed with joy the wonders the Lord had done for her (Lk 1: 46-55), Christians are empowered to make their whole lives a *Magnificat* (or "a praise of God's glory," Eph.1: 3-14.) through the "thanksgiving" (*eucharistein*) they offer God in their reception of Holy Communion.³⁵⁸ Both De Lubac³⁵⁹ and

³⁵³ Von Balthasar calls the spousal reception of Christ at the Eucharist its Marian principle. "Inserted into the Marian principle at the Eucharist, we all become contemporaries, sharing in Mary's letting the Son give himself up for us and receiving his body and Spirit. In her perfect condition of being the servant, the entire people of God can take to itself the body of the Lord and can thus be mystically incorporated into his Body. In her perfect fiat, this people can offer and release the sacrifice for the Church and for the world to the Father. Hans Von Balthasar, *Explorations III: Creator Spirit* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 240 and Leahy, *The Marian Profile*, 122.

³⁵⁴ This links with what The Church recommends reading Mary's Magnificat in a Eucharistic key. Hence taking Mary's carrying of Christ in her womb, all ecclesial person, through receiving the Eucharist, can equally cry out in her Spirit, "what wonders the Lord has worked for me" (Lk: 2:49), in sending his Son to redeem them so that they become persons. EE 58.

³⁵⁵ It is important to note however that only those who are in explicit communion with the Church, united to her in both her visible bonds, with the bishop as well as the invisible bonds of unity with her in the mystical body are able to receive the Eucharist. Even though the Eucharist is an instrument and means towards communion, and invisible communion in the life of grace can continue to deepen, nevertheless, visible communion must first be a pre-requisite. See EE 35, 36.

³⁵⁶ Marc Ouellet, "A Covenantal Mystery," 276.

³⁵⁷ Mary's Annunciation is the foreshadowing of the ecclesial person's reception of Christ in the Eucharist. *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* describes Mary's faith at the Annunciation as "eucharistic," even before the institution of the Eucharist, in the fact that "she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's word." *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 55.

³⁵⁸ Mary's glorification of God in the Magnificat is linked to the Eucharist. See EE 58. For Elizabeth of the Trinity, her calling and the realisation of her very being was to be the praise of God's glory, or a Magnificat, (which she discovered through a reading of Eph 1). She writes "a praise of God's glory," is "a person who praises God solely for who God is and allows him to radiate himself in and through her... "A praise of glory is a soul that lives in God... it is a reflector of all that he is; like a bottomless abyss into which he can flow and expand... a soul which thus permits the divine being to satisfy in itself his need to communicate "all that he has," is in reality the praise of glory of all his gifts." See *Complete Works*, vol. 1., 150 in Luigi Borriello, *Spiritual Doctrine of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity: Apostolic Contemplative* (New York: Society of St. Paul, 1986), 108.

Zizioulas write of eucharistic personalisation as an insertion into Christ's *eternal life* and his freedom of self-giving within the Trinity.³⁶⁰ We have already seen how Zizioulas makes the Eucharist the connection between sharing in the *life of the risen Lord* and becoming a person. He stresses that the "bread of *immortality*" enables the individual to share in God's *infinite* freedom so to be self-possessed (as Mary was) and to give oneself. This process of personalisation involves a continual reconstitution in Christ's love "for the praise of God's glory,"³⁶¹ which is the fulfilment of human beings made for beatitude.³⁶² Hence sharing eucharistically in Christ's eternal life is the key to personalisation.³⁶³

The self-giving that the *hypostatized* individual experiences through holy communion can be seen not only from the perspective of immanent Trinitarian *perichoresis*, but also from the revelation of Christ's self-giving in the economy. We have explored how his complete kenosis of self on the Cross, revealed Christ's essence as spouse, surrendering his life for his Bride the Church to bring her to union with him. This process of deepening union continues at every celebration of Mass. Just as Mary the Bride gives back to Christ her Bridegroom the love which he has given her (similar to how her "yes" to God is rooted in his to her through her pre-redemption), so through receiving the Eucharist, ecclesial persons become spouses

³⁵⁹ De Lubac writes "to be a person means... entering into relation with others in order to converge on a totality. The call to personal life is a vocation, that is a call to play and eternal role." See De Lubac, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 288

³⁶⁰ Zizioulas says on the difference between an individual and a person that the *individual* tends towards corruptibility. In Christ however, that individual shares in the freedom of God, which is God's own eternal life transcending material corruptibility so that the individual is *personalised*. This happens especially through reception of the Eucharist. See *Being and Communion*, 58-62.

Van Beeck says that the natural desire for God can lead the Christian in their natural self home to God. Their desires are most fully met at the Eucharist, through the Church where all the longings of their souls are fulfilled. Here they are joined intimately and personally with Christ and become one with all the others present at the Mass and with all of humanity. Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 252.

³⁶¹ Elizabeth of the Trinity discovered this passage in Ephesians as her own personal vocation and lived it out through an awareness of the indwelling Trinity in her being as Temple recreating her as a child of God, another incarnation or "super-added humanity, wherein God renews his mystery" for his glory. See Louis Bouyer, *Women Mystics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 169.

³⁶² Beatitude means a sharing in the unity of Trinitarian life, conditional upon keeping the commandment of love, (Jn15: 8-11), which can only be fulfilled through remaining in Christ (Jn15: 4) in the Church. See also St Thomas, ST, Q.3, art. 8. where he states, "for perfect happiness, the intellect needs to reach the very essence of the first cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists."

³⁶³ In uniting himself to Christ in the Eucharist, Zizioulas stresses how man is now sharing in the bread of immortality, the anecdote to death, and the eschatological fullness in which he can share now on earth and through which he is already in movement towards its very fullness. *Being and Communion*, 63.

and give back to the Bridegroom the love which he has given them revealed on the Cross.³⁶⁴ This offering of spousal love is linked to the exercise of their royal priesthood, where united with the priest, the faithful offer their own lives united with Christ's to the Father. Here they are also sharing in Christ's reconciliatory mission (2 Cor. 5).

While the Eucharist is the means of fostering vertical communion of the Bride with Christ the Bridegroom,³⁶⁵ it is also the "supreme *sacrament* of the *unity* of the People of God,"³⁶⁶ and its origins in the perfect unity of the Trinity.³⁶⁷ In these two ways it constitutes the Church. The horizontal communion it effects among members is making present of the eschatological communion *already* but which has not come in the world in its fullness. It is the Eucharist's instrumental role which expands this communion until it embraces all of humanity.³⁶⁸ This Eucharistic unity is *not* de-personalising, wherein persons loose themselves through conformity in a collective³⁶⁹ but rather is a personalising true communion wherein they share *in* the life of others and in doing so discover their *unique* identity. Thus in fact, *personal reality* is found *only* through the communion that exists within the Body of Christ and is a reflection of the perichoretic unity which is constitutive of Trinitarian persons.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴ RH 20.

³⁶⁵ The Eucharist *makes* the Church since it enables unity among men through uniting them to Christ by sharing his life in the Spirit and uniting men to God. Hence the Eucharist is the Church made small and the Church is the Eucharist made large. Hence through uniting himself to Christ in the Eucharist, man is uniting himself with all humanity in the body of Christ.

³⁶⁶ EE 43.

³⁶⁷ LG 4; LG 7; UR 2.

³⁶⁸ See LG 3: "In the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread, the unity of believers, who from one body in Christ (1Cor. 10:17), is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ..."

³⁶⁹ See Karol Wojtyla, who makes an interesting exploration of the problem of conformity in community. He says "The problem of conformism does not lie solely in the submission to the other members of the community; all the more so as such a submission may often be a positive symptom. It lies much deeper and consists in a definite renunciation of seeking the fulfilment of oneself in and through "acting together with others." The specific human ability of shaping creatively his community is dwarfed, annihilated, or perverted. This state of things cannot but have a negative effect on the common good whose dynamism springs from true personal participation. Simultaneously, conformism favours situations marked by indifference toward the common good. *Conformism brings uniformity rather than unity.* Beneath the uniform surface however, there lies *latent differentiation*, and it is the task of the community to provide for the necessary conditions for turning it into personal participation" (emphasis mine). Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 290.

³⁷⁰ In Christ the individual gives himself in a unique way to the Body in order that bodily communion is constituted (see 1Cor10-12). St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, outlines this dynamic where through constituting their personhood first in relation to Christ, individual persons receive life from him and become a single Body in him (Eph 5:31-3).

It is the Holy Spirit who is present as the Eucharist's unifying action. The work of the Paraclete drawing creation to Christ is possible since creation has now been moulded in the form of Mary's receptivity and nuptiality.³⁷¹ Hence just as Mary's receptivity drew down the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation making her his dwelling place, so at Pentecost, Mary's presence *draws* down the Spirit to unite the apostles to Christ and to each other as the first "new creatures" of the Church. This work of communion by the Paraclete continues especially in the Eucharist³⁷² where the Spirit who brings about the oneness of Bride and Bridegroom³⁷³ in their distinctiveness at the same time forms the "many" of the Body into "one" (1 Cor 12:20).³⁷⁴ Again this oneness is the sign of the mutual self-giving of unique persons in the Body manifesting the shape of Trinitarian perichoretic communion in the economy through the Church.

3.2.3. Marriage

Marriage reveals the nuptial meaning of the person yet also shares in the sacramentality of the Church's work as a sign and an instrument of unity in the world. The reality of man and woman as two separate individuals coming to find the essence of their nuptial identity in self giving is only possible through the principle of "dual unity." This is rooted as we have said in the complementarity of opposition (between divine and human nature in Christ), which enables communion. Through the sacrament of marriage, spouses share in Christ's self-giving love for his Bride the Church. Since the fullness of Christ's love for his Bride the Church is revealed at the eschaton, thus the communion of spouses in marriage both *makes present* and *points beyond* to the eschatological communion of Christ with all humanity. At the end, all persons are fulfilled by sharing in the spousal love of the Church enabling their complete self-gift to him.

³⁷¹ Fr Manteau Bonamy writes that "In God's eternal plan, *woman* is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root". In the intimate life of God, the Holy Spirit is the personal hypostasis of love. Love, which is of God, communicates itself to creatures, as a gift of God poured into their hearts. (Roms 5:5) in the form of Mary's unity with the Spirit as spouse." See *The Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, 128.

³⁷² At the Eucharist, the Church is united to Christ her Bridegroom in a single Eucharistic flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. See Marc Ouellet, "A Covenantal Mystery", 271.

³⁷³ See LG 4 on the unifying role of the Spirit. "The Spirit renews the Church and brings her to perfect unity with her Spouse."

³⁷⁴ See also EE 43. "In the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice the Church prays that God, the Father of mercies, will grant his children the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that they may become one body and one spirit in Christ."

The capacity for spousal self-giving in marriage is a sign written in human nature which *points* beyond to the nuptial meaning of the person made for a union with the Creator that is both of body and soul. Mary as the original nuptial sign especially in her bodily Assumption, reveals that nuptiality is written on human nature as a body-soul composite. Hence the body's sacramentality is the fulfilment of its nuptiality and is revealed to another in a special way at marriage but applicable to all human encounters. Since Mary is *the form of sacramentality*, (as *the* sacrament of Christ) it is thus in her that all creatures fulfil the nuptial sign of their bodies to become sacraments of Christ. In the context of marriage then, the *bodily* union of spouses becomes an outward sacramental sign of their complete inner-personal self-giving to each other and hence the sacrament is not "complete" until this integral sacramental self-giving has taken place.

While we have seen the Eucharist as the primary constitutive source of the nuptial sign of the body, marriage *expresses* it in a particular way. Therefore matrimony is in the context of Eucharistic communion and celebration so that the sign of spousal self-giving might share in God's Trinitarian life of unity and also lead spouses towards it as its ultimate consummation. In this way marriage couples share in the sacramental task of the Church to build up the communion of humanity in its recapitulation to God.³⁷⁵

3.3. The feminine sacramental element of the Church as an expression of human personhood

The Church is the continuation of Mary's identity as the Ark of the Covenant - the dwelling place of the Trinity and the sign of holiness with God's own sanctifying power. The Church's sacramental nature as the dwelling place of God thus takes a *feminine* form, bound to *her* who reveals how all creation receives its identity in God.³⁷⁶ As explored previously, Mary reveals receptivity as a key aspect of human identity. Through the grace of the Incarnation, humanity is capable of beholding and

³⁷⁵ See LG 41. The spousal self-giving is shown by "supporting one another in grace all through life with faithful love." It also involves "training their children in Christian doctrine and evangelical virtues." In this way, they become a sign to the world, "an example to all of unfailing and generous love", they "build up the brotherhood of charity, and they stand as witnesses and co-operators of the fruitfulness of, as a sign of, and a share in that love with which Christ loved his bride and gave himself for her."

³⁷⁶ See Rom 8: 22-26.

bearing the glory of God³⁷⁷ only in the form of Mary, the first sacrament of Christ. The Church sacramental role is therefore linked to her motherly and her spousal identity. Her motherhood reveals her spousal unity with the Bridegroom which is the source of her fruitfulness. Through Mary, from whom Christ took flesh, the Church learns her motherhood³⁷⁸ bringing created human nature to share in God's life and enabling communion with Christ and with other human persons. Through the "Mater", all *matter* is changed and becomes responsive to God, receptive to his divine life. While divinity does not need matter to complete itself, matter participating in divine life, magnifies the glory and greatness of divine nature. Hence just as a spouse reveals something of the beauty of the other, by calling forth the best from them, (and this is actually part of their union) so too Mary's union with Christ her spouse reflects him and magnifies his identity (in particular his identity as spouse as he could not be Bridegroom without her as his Bride). Like Mary who glorifies Christ, so too the feminine sacramental life of the Church reflects the glory of the Bridegroom since it draws *God's power* continually into creation to transform it and it becomes fruitful. Thus creaturely identity that "bears Christ" and is fulfilled in communion in the Church magnifies the creator and the beauty of his order.

While Mary's bridal form is "the comprehensive femininity of the Church,"³⁷⁹ it also becomes a symbol of all that is *human*, of what it is to be a person in relation to the divine other.³⁸⁰ The culmination of a relationship of self-surrender to Christ is the reception of his Body as the image of the *pièta* reveals. Members of the Church receive the gift of their spouse himself through the sacraments enabling them to live their royal priesthood or their spousality in the offering of their own lives (now personalised) to him and others. Since this personalisation re-creates human beings in *both body and soul*, they are now sacramental signs to others of the fullness of

³⁷⁷ "We saw his glory. This glory is from the Father, and is grace and truth (Jn1: 14)." See Von Balthasar on the New Testament understanding of glory. "The New Testament understanding of glorifying God no longer has God as its object but as its inner principle. Thanks to the glory of God's love visible in Jesus Christ and his cross and Resurrection, we are drawn into his love through his grace and are empowered to give it the response attained by God himself," *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. Vol. II, 398.

³⁷⁸ RM 43.

³⁷⁹ MD 27 connects Mary's bridal form to her priestly form. It portrays Mary as priest in her self-surrender leading to the Cross, where she offers herself with Christ to the Father and then receives his Body-an image of her being given the Church.

³⁸⁰ While the symbols of being virgin and mother are seen as feminine concepts, they nevertheless apply to both male and females in the Church. Also as spouse of Christ Mary represents the deepest communion of males and females with Christ - the fulfilment of personhood. Thus taking these three concepts of virgin, mother and spouse, Mary reveals the fullness of sacramentality, the full meaning of what it is to be a sacrament of Christ as both his sign and his instrument in the world.

personal communion with Christ. This “feminine”³⁸¹ form of personhood applies to *both* women and men in the Church, since as fully *receptive* and fully *fruitful*, personhood now is fully human. Through their receptivity, persons in the Church also assimilate Christ’s *mission*. Hence ecclesial persons as receptive-fruitful beings recapitulate the world through *manifesting* personalised human identity and *leading* others to that personalisation.³⁸²

Many feminists would take issue with this idea of the sacramental nature of the Church as feminine since it is based on an understanding of the Bride characterised as female, receptive and passive in relation to the male spouse defining her identity and granting her own powers of self-giving. As we have mentioned in chapter two, they see that the Church has constructed an idealised femininity through its Mariology, branding receptivity and self-giving seen in Mary as perfect “female” qualities which they claim men in the Church have used to deny women their proper role.³⁸³ In claiming this understanding of women, these feminists have become susceptible to modernity’s deception that the human being is autonomous and only free apart from God and others.³⁸⁴ They have lost the understanding that persons only exist through *relationship* and the Church’s sacramentality is not there to create autonomous persons, but *persons in communion* with Christ and with others.

In order to reclaim the truth of personhood, receptivity cannot be seen as “a female trait” but rather a prized characteristic of both males and females as a necessary constituent of their humanity. Since in Christ, there is “neither male nor female,”³⁸⁵ this means that typically female traits of self-giving and receptivity and masculine traits of independence and rationality can apply to both men or women. Nevertheless, due to the modern understanding of person categorised in rationalistic

³⁸¹ It is feminine because it is spousal in relation to Christ as other.

³⁸² In this light, a vocational focus which is concerned only with the *exterior*s of celibacy or marriage detracts from the *primary power* which ecclesial persons have as sacramental signs to the world. If human beings are awakened to the fundamental dignity of being personalised in Christ, their vocational question would be to ask in what way through the certain gifts they have been given, their unique life can best be an exterior sign of interior communion with Christ. Reflecting on this primary call will best lead them to choose their state in life.

³⁸³ A femininity that slavishly allows men to dominate women, relegating them to an inferior position out of a lack of self-worth is not a correct understanding of their female personhood. Nor is a femininity, which pushes women to the top, in a power struggle to dominate and exist in a dehumanising independence from others in an attempt to be equal.

³⁸⁴ Rather than asking how a woman’s nature can balance an over emphasis on the person seen as rational and autonomous, feminists make autonomy the basis of personhood by “democratising” it. See Schindler’s excellent discussion of this in “Creation and Nuptiality,” 291

³⁸⁵ Gal. 3:28.

terms, it is the loss of these “typically feminine qualities” which needs to be addressed, not only in men but in women too.³⁸⁶ Intuition, self-giving, receptivity and the ability to relate empathically to others have often been characterised as traditionally feminine traits and seen as inferior. These traits however are absolutely necessary to correct modernity’s understanding of the person as rational, disembodied, supposedly free and independent and in doing so lead to a personalisation of the world. Also only by embodying these traits can the Church *actualise* her sacramentality as a sign and instrument of communion to the world. Although she is sign and sacrament of unity, unless her members realise that their fruitfulness comes from Christ, they will forsake the fullness of their humanity and at the same time the world will not awaken to its destiny. The sacramental power of the ecclesial person as sign and instrument is dependent on his acceptance of his creaturely finiteness and in that his creative *power* in relation to God.³⁸⁷ In accepting the myth of human self-sufficiency and the means to create a better world through technological progress alone, men and women are not cultivating the receptivity to God which is innate in them. Even those within the Church are neglecting their full personal identity by seeing it in these autonomous terms. Often only through suffering and personal loss is the individual awakened to the realisation that he is not completely independent and that personal happiness is somehow connected to human relationships which point beyond the material dimensions of life. This loss often prompts a call from the depths of his nothingness to a transcendent being surpassing his creaturely instability and in whom he discovers fulfilment manifested in a peaceful harmony of his being.³⁸⁸

Mary is both the model and means of constituting a true personal identity rooted in communion as a corrective to one of false autonomy. This Marian identity is one offered to both men and women, constituted through the Church and especially revealed in liturgical worship and adoration.³⁸⁹ Women however have a particular role

³⁸⁶ Intuition and self-giving, receptivity and the ability to relate to the other have often been characterised as traditionally feminine traits and seen as inferior. These traits are however are what is needed to correct modernity’s understanding of the person as rational, disembodied, supposedly free and independent.

³⁸⁷ Schindler, “Creation and Nuptiality,” 280.

³⁸⁸ Humility is learnt through prayer, which is a sharing in Christ’s own humility and as such, a sharing in his surrender to his Father’s will. See Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 63.

³⁸⁹ Schindler writes on this point that “this false autonomy which was formerly largely restricted to men, and indeed often checked by an accompanying liturgical-nuptial-Marian piety, now becomes

in presenting this identity as they represent Mary and hence the Marian dimensions of Church in a particular way by virtue of their femaleness, just as men by virtue of their maleness reveal aspects of Christ's identity, which women do not reveal. While this realisation seems anathema to a modern understanding of gender equality, it forgets that sexuality is not simply an accidental quality of human personhood but is an essential aspect of self-identity.³⁹⁰ Women in Christ are receptive and fruitful in their own particular feminine form and are to bring this identity formed through the Church to the larger communion of humanity. Transformed as female ecclesial persons they call upon men to manifest their ecclesial nature through an understanding of their maleness rooted in Christ. Hence through the communion of persons experienced in the Church, men and women find their identities as human beings who reveal Christ in and through their own sexual-personal attributes. This manifests to the world that being either a male or female person transforms and integrates former *stereotypical* sexual qualities, which caused division and were not expressive of fulfilled identities found in Christ.

The Church is constituted by its member's (male and female) common sharing in Mary's assent to Christ,³⁹¹ and *all* share in the Church's mission. When women ask what their role is in the Church they often seem to confine this to a visible task-oriented function and forget that the Church's primary role is as sacrament to the world. Hence sharing in the Church's mission actually means sharing in its nature as sacramental *sign* and personalising *instrument* of society, re-creating beings capable of *receiving* Christ's life and *giving* it to others. Just as men in their maleness represent Christ as priest and bridegroom in a particular way, so women in their composite spiritual-physical identity represent the Bridal-Church's sacramental role as life-giving and recreator in a particular way. Unfortunately as we have seen, contemporary women are accepting the myth that happiness is gained through autonomy and that this is only achievable through a disassociation of themselves from their *life-giving* roles. Through a prevailing contraceptive mentality they are made to feel that physical motherhood or even spiritual motherhood (giving life to others

unrestricted and unchecked; it is available to all, women and men. All of us are now equal "partners in our autonomy; none of us is a handmaid." Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality," 291.

³⁹⁰ Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* (London; Phoenix Press, 1986), 278.

³⁹¹ Hans Von Balthasar writes "the Church is in her deepest reality, the unity of those who are gathered and formed by the immaculate and limitless assent of Mary, which through grace has the form of Christ are prepared to let the saving will of God take place in themselves and for all their brethren." Hans Von Balthasar, *My Work in Retrospect*. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 63.

through a giving of self in their specific feminine way) is a weaker form of being human and so they enter into “unitive” relationships which are not fruitful. Hence society is being deprived of the unique personalising role of women as both physical and spiritual life-givers.

If by contrast women *accept* their specific life-giving female identity³⁹² this will lead to their own identification with *the nature of the Church as the giver of divine life* (which is her true Marian identity embracing all other aspects of identity such as the Petrine, hierarchical elements). In this light, the Church’s hierarchical offices are to be seen as sacramental expressions of her deeper life source, which women in their female nature express *already* in a transparent way through their own form of sacramentality. While many women say they are excluded from power in the Church even though they are reminded that hierarchical offices are roles of *service*, they seem to forget that true power is not a form of external control but is *internal, generating and life-giving*. Mary illustrates that the creature who lives nuptiality and worships God becomes *powerful* with the generativity of God himself. All creatures (including those in hierarchical offices which are merely one expression of this) actually share in this life-giving creativity of the Church’s recapitulating mission so that Christ himself will be more glorified³⁹³ thus expanding his power through their sacramentality.³⁹⁴

By virtue of being female, women share in a specific way in the Church’s *mission* to represent the life of Christ her spouse in the world in a way that is completely *humanising* and cannot be disregarded as merely feminising or spiritualising. It is humanising because it is *spousal* and therefore a sacramental-expressive of interior communion. Since the Church’s first duty is adoration,³⁹⁵ thus the main witness of her spousality is in her liturgical life. Women only fulfil their nature as spousal signs (particular transparent forms of God’s life giving nature) and their personalising mission in the world if they are firstly in communion with the

³⁹² Men are also life givers in their own specific way, but I am dealing here with how women in their share in a special way in Mary’s identity by virtue of being female.

³⁹³ Sharing in God’s power increases his glory, as God’s children see themselves in relation to him and address him as Father. A similar idea is found in the “Our Father”. The Catechism in its commentary points out that when the faithful say, “Hallowed be thy Name”, they are not praying that God’s name be sanctified, but praising his name and enfleshing this praise in their lives, they are asking that their lives will glorify his holy name by embodying his holiness. See Catechism of the Catholic Church, (Dublin: Veritas, 1994), #2807.

³⁹⁴ Schindler, “Creation and Nuptiality,” 279.

³⁹⁵ See Henri De Lubac in Hans von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri De Lubac* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 102-103.

Bridegroom through prayer, especially through sharing his Body and Blood. As we have seen, this personal communion with Christ and others in the Body is manifested not only in the spiritual and sacral spheres of life, but even in the midst of the secular world, as the micro-representation of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. Just as through her progressive union with Christ her Son, Mary became more *humanised*, so the ecclesial person deepening unity with Christ, should also become more human, representing the nature of salvation in Christ as integral (in body and soul redeemed as a composite whole).³⁹⁶ Both Karl Rahner³⁹⁷ and Elizabeth Johnson³⁹⁸ see Mary's life in Christ as the perfect contemporary anthropological model.³⁹⁹ The model of the pregnant Mother of God, pondering the Word within her even as she reached out in the visitation becomes the archetype of all human activities both in the sacred and the secular sphere.⁴⁰⁰ Johnson⁴⁰¹ and Fransen⁴⁰² describe how all activities of a person in communion with Christ, lead to a deepening of that union and hence a growing humanisation.⁴⁰³ The person in Christ sees God's providential

³⁹⁶“Our divinisation is also our humanisation” Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 135

³⁹⁷ Mary can be offered as an anthropological model to modern man seeking a meaning to life. Rahner sees the term existentialist simply meaning that it sheds meaning on life. He sees that including Mary in theology makes for an existential theology. He points out that because all humanity is connected and must intercede for everyone as brothers and sisters that Mary has significance for all human beings, Rahner, *Mary, Mother of the Lord*, 31.

³⁹⁸ Johnson's Mariology is based on a *dynamic* Christology, and Mary is seen in relation to the work of the Spirit through time continuing the presence of Jesus in the world. She says that presenting Mary in this light as one who followed the Spirit in faith, as one like us in the communion of saints, makes her a more accessible model for human beings. Here Johnson is borrowing from Schillebeeck's Christology in *Christ*, 641 in *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*.

³⁹⁹ A Mariological anthropology is the perfect *existential* understanding of man, rooted in Christ yet worked out in life through following the Spirit so that man's experiences and choices are free and authenticating of his graced humanity.

⁴⁰⁰ In Mary's life as in Christ's there is no separation between the contemplative and the active life Ruusbroeck sees this *intimacy* and union with Christ in contemplation and in action as at the level of human nature itself. Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 250.

⁴⁰¹ Johnson sees grace as a humanising force that gives “gives importance to all human things and all human encounters in the world: joys and sufferings, the body and sexuality, relationships of intimacy and community, creativity and intellectual effort, formation of beneficial social structures, struggle and resistance against oppressive forces, and action for long-term peace, justice, and the integrity of creation”. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 109.

⁴⁰²“God is as pleased with our courtesy to others as much as with our prayers, with our enjoyment of nature as much as with our rejoicing in his glory, with our human friendships as much as with our faith...so long as we act with the heart of a child of God”. Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 135.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 226. Love or grace is as Fransen describes it as like an “openness dynamically ordained, a fully willed surrender of life as a whole, the “soul” of our entire activity in the concrete. One's whole being is held in this love, sustained in it, as the Holy Spirit is the life of the soul and guides even the most common of actions. This is not an experience that man is or must be consciously aware of

care in every situation,⁴⁰⁴ endowing him with the freedom of the child of God,⁴⁰⁵ enabling him to perform worldly tasks yet rise above them to transform them.⁴⁰⁶ His love of his neighbours expressed in sharing their worries, sorrows, joys and loneliness⁴⁰⁷ is the outward sign of his communion with God.⁴⁰⁸ Lay members of the Church are specifically called to be Christ's prophetic presence in the world by living in communion with God in the midst of professional and other secular activities.⁴⁰⁹ Through union with Christ in the sacraments ecclesial persons share *already* in the eschatological, eternal life⁴¹⁰ in the midst of the world, yet as their own lives move to fulfilment through the Spirit, they draw creation with them.

3.4. Sacramental union as "ecclesialisation"

Through the deepening union with Christ and surrender to his mission, Mary's life is *deprivatised* and yet paradoxically she is personalised. Her life therefore is the model of how every ecclesial person is gradually *deprivatised* through being in the Church, yet becomes *personalised* in this process. In the Church, one loses

⁴⁰⁴ They are able to see love in the world, where it exists and where it is lacking. It is seen in the experience of God's providence, lacking in that there are many people who need to experience it. It also is manifested through poetry, culture and art, developments and progress in science and technology once they respect and uphold the nobility and dignity of the human person. Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 184.

⁴⁰⁵ Van Beeck describes the longing soul's union with Christ in mystical prayer as ebbing and flowing between *freedom* and *intimacy*. At times grace is the grace of intimacy, where the person is inwardly moved to "go in", "in selfless love in union with the Word of God into the depths of contemplation, where God dwells". He describes the state of *freedom* as "energy" whereby the person is moved to go out, to serve the world and the neighbour, to the person who is longing for God to be remade in his image and likeness. Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 250.

⁴⁰⁶ Fortmann writes: "their commitment to these [tasks in the world] is no longer unconditional because they already live in a higher world. Fortmann, *The Theology of Man and Grace*, 361. Here Fortmann is drawing on the work of L. Cerfaux on St. Paul's understanding of the New Man.

⁴⁰⁷ Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 184.

⁴⁰⁸ 1 Jn 4:20. See also Schillebeeckx where he writes "in the Church's confrontation with mankind in history, her members must be living examples and "types" of Christ's overflowing love and manifest their willingness to give up their personal lives in the service of others." Schillebeeckx, "The Church and Mankind," 48.

⁴⁰⁹ See Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 70 and John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 23. "Their own [the laity's] field of evangelising activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelisation, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work and suffering."

⁴¹⁰ Ruusbroeck sees the eschatological union with Christ, possible for the soul as possible to anticipate in the "actuality" of Christian life in the present. Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 250.

Heaven is a continuation of this gradual deepening of communion with God as sons and daughters. Fransen, *The New Life of Grace*, 221. These ideas are expressed in Pauline and Johannine letters. "Because for us, there is no veil over the face, we all reflect as in a mirror the splendour of the Lord; then we are transfigured into His likeness, from splendour to splendour; such is the influence of the Lord who is Spirit (2 Cor 3:18)." "We are already God's children; What we shall be has not yet been disclosed. But we know that we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1Jn 3:1-2).

solipsistic individualism in order to find a personalised individuality within the Body.⁴¹¹ Only through communion in the Body, are the fruits of ecclesial person's unique personal contribution given to the Church.⁴¹² Thus their lives become "ecclesial principles themselves (*real* symbol in- and for the Church)."⁴¹³ By committing themselves to work within the Church, their existence becomes *universalised* as they identify themselves with the Church's mission and intentions.⁴¹⁴ The *ecclesialisation* of persons occurs when on the path of discipleship, their lives take on increasingly objective and ecclesial features.⁴¹⁵ This process took place in the lives of many of the saints. St. Therese saw herself as "love in the heart of the Church"⁴¹⁶ and Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity saw her vocation as "the praise of God's glory."⁴¹⁷ Mary herself however, being *the* ecclesial symbol of Virgin, Mother and Bride, in fact sums up *every* ecclesial symbol that exists in the Church. At the anthropological level, *she* is therefore the symbol of ecclesial personhood.

Thus while persons are universalised through insertion into the Church's mission, they are also personalised since human persons find their fullness only when they become ec-centric and live out of a centre other than themselves. They can do this only in the Church by being personalised in love through her *universal* motherhood.

⁴¹¹ Ackermann writes: "While growing increasingly less private, they are all the while becoming more deeply personal, more super-personal, paradigmatic, prototypical and archetypical for all who in faith recognise and embrace their mission from God. Stephan Ackerman, "The Church as Person in the Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar," 243.

⁴¹² See Von Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord Vol. 3, Persons in Christ*, 349 in Ackerman, "The Church as Person", 243

⁴¹³ Ratzinger and Von Balthasar, *Maria, Kirche in Ursprung* (Freiberg : Johannes Verlag, 1997), 158.

⁴¹⁴ Von Balthasar writes that the more a person commits him or herself to God's work in the Church through Christ, the more their existence becomes "universal" and by that they "grow to the dimensions of the Church and identify themselves with her intentions", becoming "persons of the Church". Hans Von Balthasar, *Kirche im Ursprung*, 121 in Ackermann, "The Church as Person," 245.

⁴¹⁵ Adrienne von Speyr, *Kostet und Seht: Ein theologisches Lesebuch*, selected and edited by Hans Von Balthasar (Einsiedeln and Trier, 1988), 327 and see also 338.

⁴¹⁶ St. Therese, *Story of a Soul*, (Washington: ICS Publications, 1996), 194: "It is You, O my God, who have given me this place; in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I shall be Love".

⁴¹⁷ Elizabeth like Therese also refers to herself as the embodiment of the concept of her vocation. She refers to herself as "The Praise of Glory" like Therese refers to herself as LOVE as though she embodies it as ecclesial principle and has lost her subjective, old, self in that discovery. Yet through finding their ecclesial identities, both of them have somehow found their very personhood. See Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, *Complete Works, Vol 1*, tr. A. Kane, O.C.D., (I.C.S. Publications, Washington D.C, 1984), 112-113.

3.5. Non-sacramental union with Christ through the Church as a form of personalisation

Christ came to save the whole human race. His salvific power applies to every person who is part of his body, whether they are aware of it or not.⁴¹⁸ There are many Christians who are part of the mystical body, but *outside* her visible structures. Other non-Christians are related to Christ and his body but not part of it.

The idea of Christ as representing all humanity, while it was emphasised at the Second Vatican Council is not a contemporary idea.⁴¹⁹ Ruusbroeck recovered Irenaeus' view on Christ as the measure of man, and saw every human as a being-in-relation to God due to the Incarnation.⁴²⁰ Logically then, he saw mysticism as a potentially universal experience⁴²¹ as all human beings in their very humanity are graced beings, ontologically united to God.⁴²² The human spirit is created for this basic encounter with Christ, by virtue of its very humanness. Ruusbroeck's anthropology is similar to that of contemporary theologians like De Lubac⁴²³ and

⁴¹⁸ Nicholas Healy point out commenting on St. Thomas that "everyone is a member of the body of Christ, whether or not they are aware of it, because-and this if St. Thomas' main point-the "power of Christ" is "sufficient for the salvation of the whole human race" (ST 3.8.3 ad 1). Healy goes on to say, "In terms of its proper end, humanity is constituted as a group or 'body', not by something that pertains to itself so much as by its relation to Jesus Christ. Nicholas Healy, *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian of the Christian Life*. (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), 110.

⁴¹⁹ Irenaeus was the first of the Church Fathers to highlight that human's reach the fullness of their humanity in Christ, in his image. Origen, Athanasius followed his thinking and later Gregory of Nazianzen described the human person as "the image of Christ the image and who has the duty to "respect the prototype image" see R.P.C. Hanson's discussion of Gregory Nazianzen, in *The Search of the Christian doctrine of God*, 709 in Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 253.

⁴²⁰This is due to the Incarnation, where Christ is the form of all things as expressed in the great Christological hymn of Colossians "through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him" See Von Beeck, *God Encountered*,

⁴²¹ Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 22 (SC62, 64-65; ed. Robinson, 89-90); cf. the elaboration of this in *Adv. Haer. V*, 16, 1-2 (SC153, vol.2, 212-217) in Van Beeck, *God Encountered*, 253.

While every creature in its own very humanity is always united to God in grace, Ruusbroeck sees that the deeper mystical graces which have been described by the great mystics are simply due to a deeper appreciation through grace of God's immense love for them; an understanding that God is the one who is the object of all their searching in the world.

⁴²²Ruusbroeck writes of human nature that: "The spirit essentially possesses God in its bare nature, and God possesses the Spirit for it lives in God and God in it. By virtue of the higher part of itself, it is capable of receiving, without intermediary, God's resplendence and all that God can accomplish", in Van Beeck, 249. Ruusbroeck sees that what defines human nature is its attunement to God. He sees that God is in an act of continuous creation of the human person and this can be experienced in prayer. The being and the life that we have in God is identical with the being and the life we have and are in ourselves. God thus dwells in every human being and the divine likeness is continuously being established in our being

⁴²³ De Lubac sees that all humans are graced since they all receive the Holy Spirit and are united to Christ .De Moulins-Beaufort commenting on De Lubac here, writes that individuals can only discover this eternal role in and through their unity with Christ. Eric De Moulins-Beaufort, "The Spiritual man in de Lubac," 300

Rahner who see man in his nature as inherently graced. This differs from St. Thomas's view who said that grace never comes through man's created relation to God.⁴²⁴

The understanding of an inherently graced humanity raises questions about who ecclesial persons are. If all human beings are "in Christ" by virtue of their natural humanity then logically it seems that all human beings are in the Church.⁴²⁵ This however is *not* the case. *Lumen Gentium* simply says that since God's *will* is that *all* men be saved, then all humanity is *related* to the Church.⁴²⁶

The fundamental point to consider while addressing this question is that the *essence* of being an ecclesial person is *personalised* growth to full union with Christ. This depends on a continual disposition to receive Christ and the flowering of the life of grace in their lives through charity. Thus the question who is an ecclesial person is the same as the question where is the Church. As the Church's presence is not confined exclusively to within her visible bounds,⁴²⁷ so too ecclesial persons are also present outside her visible bounds. The criteria for ecclesial personhood is *personalisation*. I have already illustrated the criteria for personalisation is a life lived in Christ and that this is fully possible within the motherhood of the Roman Catholic Church where the fullness of the means to bring forth Christ are present.⁴²⁸ Hence just as there are many ecclesial persons *fully incorporated* into the Church, *and explicitly*

⁴²⁴ According to St. Thomas, all grace comes solely "through the personal action of Jesus Christ himself", never through our created relation to God or through our nature" (ST 3.8.5 ad 1). Nicholas M. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian of the Christian Life* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), 111.

⁴²⁵ Eric De Moulins-Beaufort, "The Spiritual man in de Lubac", *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998), 300 He refers to the Church as "nothing else, in the end, than humanity itself, vivified and unified by the Spirit of Christ."

⁴²⁶ See LG 13, "all men are called to belong to the new People of God. This people therefore, whilst remaining one and only one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and to all ages in order that the design of God's will may be fulfilled he made human nature one in the beginning and has decreed that all his children who were scattered should be finally gathered together as one" (Jn 11:52).

LG14: fully incorporated into the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organisation, and who – by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion—are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules through her Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops. LG 14 goes on to see that "Catechumens are by their very *intention* joined to the Church," hence showing that there are relationships to the Church which are not those of *full* visible incorporation, such as those baptised in other ecclesial communities to whom the Church is joined (LG15). Even those who "who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways" (LG16).

⁴²⁷ See LG 8. Although "this Church (as the sole Church of Christ) constituted and organised as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him, nevertheless many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines."

⁴²⁸ See LG 14.

inserted into Christ through the sacraments, who *do not* reach such a *personalisation* in their lives as they have not fully opened themselves to the self-giving possible through the full means given in the Church,⁴²⁹ so too there are many persons *outside* the visible boundaries of the Church who manifest the full flowering of the life of *anonymous* insertion into Christ in lives of self-giving and service through making full use of the means they have. They are *implicitly* ecclesial persons in that they have become personalised, and “anonymously” developed their being-in-relation to Christ through opening their lives to transcendence and also by self-giving to others. Hence they reveal the essence of what it is to be a person in the Church through their fruitfulness.

The Church is inseparable from Christ yet at once exists to *serve* Christ and his mission of uniting humanity with God. While *full* incorporation of persons into the Church serves this mission with the surety of divine promise, the Church is still operative outside her visible bounds to serve the same purpose of the *personalisation* of *all* humanity in Christ. Logically if *Christ* is *representative* of all humanity his body must also be. Thus the Church *represents* all humanity (even though all humanity are not yet part of the Church) and is itself the movement of humanity towards fullness of communion with God.⁴³⁰

Although it is outside the scope of this thesis, the question must be asked, *to what extent* those Christians outside the visible confines of the Church, and those of other faiths, can contribute however anonymously, to the Church’s mission to recapitulate the world to God. This happens through their relation to the Church. All ecclesial persons (those who are both inside and outside of the visible boundaries of the Church) share in the Church’s mission to all *other* human beings who are *related* to the Church but not yet incorporated into her (either visibly or invisibly). Wherever self-giving and communion with God and others is present in their lives, these elements are in Christ and offered to the Father for his glory. Their own identity or mission however is not yet fulfilled. By reflecting on Mary it emerges that fullness of

⁴²⁹ See LG14 “All children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, *not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ*. If they fail to respond in thought, word and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be the more severely judged.”

⁴³⁰ See LG 9. “[T]hat messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth, it is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all; as the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. Mt. 5:13-16) it is sent forth into the whole world.”

personal identity is found in receiving Christ's fullness in order to give oneself to him. The fullest sign of a life lived in relation to Christ is that of Mary. Hence to be fully in Christ, persons need to be in Mary's form and this is the form of the Church. In the Church it is possible to realise the *fullness* of creaturely relationship to him.

In light of the above discussion, the task and mission of the Church as Mother becomes one of awakening individuals to *desire* their own *personalisation* and fulfilment as beings in communion, in relation to God and others. Her second task is to *reveal* that this process occurs explicitly in the Church in and through its sacramental life and that she is the *means* of personalisation. The Church can thus be presented as the fulfilment of the human heart and its quest for personalisation in a way that satisfies their desires to give and receive love from others. This discovery of identity as being-in-relation is fulfilled in a way that becomes Trinitarian since it is analogously *perichoretic* through the Eucharist.⁴³¹ Like Mary and in her form, Ecclesial persons are hence the micro-sign of human identity as nuptial, fulfilled in communion with God and others. In their communion they both *represent* fulfilled humanity and are the *means* through which humanity reaches personal fulfilment. Mary is the perfect sign and model of the ecclesial person since she reveals to all the world that personhood can only be found in a life receptive to Christ and fruitful in him. Reflecting on Mary then and participating in her virginal, motherly and spousal nature in the Church, modern man finds *himself* since he finds his reconstitution in Christ

4.0. CONCLUSION CHAPTER III

In this chapter I have shown that the Church is a sign and instrument in the world of communion of God between God and humanity and of creatures among themselves. The Church is a sign of grace to the world in the form of Mary as she was the sign of the fullness of grace. The Church hence takes on Mary's manifold representational identity as Virgin in her receptivity to grace, as Mother in her life-giving role of personalisation and as Bride in her spousal union with Christ the source of life. Thus the Church is *the* being-in-relation whose identity is constituted in relation to Christ.

Ecclesial persons in the Church take on the Church's nature at a micro personal level. They find their true selves as beings-in-relation to Christ the source of

⁴³¹ The Eucharist fulfils the longing of their human nature for union with God and with each other, which they can begin to experience even in this life as a foreshadowing of full union in heaven. To be fully human means one is ecclesial person, personalised in the image of Trinitarian person in the form and likeness of Mary.

life, since they as persons have been inserted into Mary's personhood. Hence it is in Marian form that they are constituted in relation to Christ. As "virgins," in Mary's form they reveal that personhood exists through receptivity to an infinite Other, who fills them with divine life. In this virginal form they reveal the nuptial meaning of the person as made for fullness of communion with God; hence they are also constituted in Mary's sinless and spousal image. Only through openness to divine life can they become full of life and give birth to the life of Christ within them. In this way they spiritually take on Mary's congruent identities as virgin-mother and bride.

This identity as nuptial, life-bearing and life-giving, is formed in them through the Church, which takes on the personalising and life-giving aspects of Mary's role as Mother. In the womb of the Church they are formed in her likeness to represent the Church as a sign to the world of the nuptial meaning of the person. The formation of this identity occurs through the sacraments which insert them into the life of Christ. In baptism they "die" to the self as merely biological and are incorporated into Christ's resurrected life as Mary was as the first of the redeemed. Through the Eucharist, this life of communion with Christ and this sharing in his risen life is deepened. It is the Eucharist that constitutes the Church as a *communion* and in the same way constitutes the person in the Church as a *person of communion*. Through the Eucharist, the person is fully self-possessed through communion with God and only then is free to give the self away in charity to others.

The Church's sacramental life shows the dignity of matter, which in Mary's form now bears the capacity to receive and witness to divine life. The Church is thus functionally and ontologically representative of Mary's womb constituting nuptial beings in relation to Christ, and is therefore a feminine image. It is feminine since in order to be fully relational, one needs to be fully receptive and receptivity is fulfilled in the sign of Mary as feminine other to God. Feminists have equated the receptivity typically assigned to Mary as a strategy merely to oppress women in the Church who are seen as "other" in a way secondary to men. They therefore dismiss the idealisation of female receptivity as a male ploy to keep women in roles, which deprive them of their rightful unique contributions to the Church.

Yet as I have argued, receptivity is a vital dimension of personhood if individuals are to become beings-in-relation. To witness to God's divine life and to give themselves to others they have to first receive their identity in relationship to God. Receptivity is vital for every person whether male and female as it is the

defining quality, enabling the body's sacramental quality as nuptial sign to be fulfilled. Mary is the actualisation of humankind's ability to *receive* God and hence is the first sacrament of Christ, revealing by grace that God has joined himself with human flesh. Individuals find the meaning of their identity when in Mary's form they also become sacraments of Christ and his divine life. Hence they reveal through self-giving that the human body now shares in God's life and that that life takes a unique form in every human body that is part of Christ's with a unique role to play. As ecclesial persons each express Christ uniquely, the unity of the body grows, and the Church becomes a more authentic sacrament to the world.

The Eucharist constitutes the fullness of the ecclesial person in her/his personal union with Christ. It is this union of Christ with his mystical body at the micro-personal level of union with ecclesial persons, which fulfils human nature "already" and at the same time through the Eucharistic liturgy, brings it forward and closer to its eschatological fullness in heaven. When ecclesial persons receive the Eucharist in the Church they are the specific sign in the world of communion with God and through offering the world to God at each Eucharistic sacrifice, they become *instruments* contributing to the elevation of society from age to age.

Through the Eucharist, ecclesial persons are thus also in relation to those who are not in sacramental union with Christ's Church. While all humanity is called to relationship with Christ not all can receive the Eucharist although their very humanity in its restlessness manifests their need for it. Their own recognition that life is not fulfilled in material things urges them to recognise their need to share in Christ's eternal life now and fulfil their biological existence. Only then can they live life to the full (Jn 10:10). Through encountering ecclesial persons who are sacraments of the eternal life they seek in the world, humanity can potentially recognise that true freedom, joy and human purpose comes from surrendering to Christ and that this is possible through the Church. While all the sacraments of the Church unite persons to Christ, the Eucharist in a particular way provides the spiritual strength and nourishment they need to become persons of self-giving realising their objective human nature on a daily basis in the midst of the changing and often difficult challenges of modern living. Mary is their model of the human being who found the fullness of her human identity in Christ, revealing true freedom, joy, hope and peace in the pilgrimage of life.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

In concluding, I wish to weave together the detailed strands of this thesis, and unite them in the person of Mary as the revelation of the concept of person to the modern man. I also wish to emphasise how the ideas presented here have repercussions for man in his moral life.

Modernity has searched for an image of man disconnected from God to find freedom and fulfilment. It has seen freedom and life in God as mutually exclusive. Christianity however reveals human nature as fulfilled by grace which transforming it, raises it to its essence, thus enabling human freedom. Breaking from a Christian integrated anthropology where man is a body-soul composite, contemporary philosophy has taken a dualistic understanding of man separating body from soul and mind. The body is seen as a purely materialist concept with no connection to a life of reason which informs it in order that it fulfil its essence. The body has thus closed itself off to grace which transforms and completes it in a way that the body becomes the exterior sign expressing the inward reality of what it is to be human – a person in communion with God.

This false understanding of personhood as merely a biological reality has had repercussions especially in the area of sexual morality where in contemporary society sexual expression is no longer a personal act which is both spousal and life-giving but has become a value-free and merely physical act, often a disguised attempt to find self through control of another. The Church presents Mary as the model of the human person and the corrective to this flawed contemporary model. Reflecting on Mary and her identity as virgin-mother and spouse reveals that the fullness of personhood is found in relation to Christ. Thus by living in Christ all human acts henceforth are expressive of personal union with him. The ecclesial person is one who has been re-created in this Marian form of personhood by grace – Marian since it is receptive to Christ and fruitful *by* him. Hence the natural nuptial potentiality of human persons is fulfilled through this grace enabling them to express their personhood. Thus for example as they enter into spousal communion with another in marriage, they reveal the fullness of human identity as a person made for communion. Sexual union for them is more than a biological act but is *sacramental* with a Marian identity since it is both fully receptive to another and expressive of their own personal self-giving. Hence the person in the Church has a sacramental identity existing fundamentally in

relation to God. Mary is the form and revelation of sacramentality and the “new creature” and the Church takes on this form as both sign and instrument of the new person recreated through grace.

Mary also reveals to the contemporary world that as the person is more than purely material, that the body is not to be manipulated. This has immediate implications for scientific experimentation and raises questions about the morality of attempting to “create” human persons through IVF and cloning. Scientific attempts to create human beings, and selective ways of thinking which deem some lives viable and other non viable, undermines the reality of the inviolable dignity of all human life.

Modern man in seeking “freedom” through arbitrary choice-making is attempting to break free from objective norms, which he perceives as oppressive to his creativity and uniqueness. This is a futile search, as freedom is intrinsically connected to man’s nature as made for God. Mary reveals that such freedom is possible only through insertion into Christ whose life has triumphed over the depersonalisation of sin and death. Paradoxically while this freedom is objective and in accord with the New Law, it is also *subjective*, not in a relativistic sense but in an way that is perfectly suited to each individual humanising him in Christ’s image yet with his own personality and gifts. Mary was the first creature to live the New Law inscribed on her heart as God’s Word took flesh in and through her. Through the Spirit she followed God’s will and law and thus lived a freedom that was fully dynamic, subjective and yet objective in conformity with human nature. Post-modern man is searching for precisely this type of freedom: fully subjective and dynamic in that it applies to the person in a completely unique way, yet is applicable to many changing situations. Without an objective understanding of human nature however, post-modern “dynamism” becomes mere hyperactivity as it is has no purposeful direction and its choices lead nowhere. Rather than becoming fulfilled as a creative being through new experience and situations, he therefore becomes confused, empty and ultimately full of despair.

Contemporary Man is afraid that if he surrenders to God or enters into communion with others through the Church that he will loose what he perceives is his freedom to create himself. Mary reveals that one is not personalised through being absolutely independent, but through self-surrender to God in order to be able to give self to others. While this surrender to God in the Church may lead to a de-

privatisation of man, paradoxically as we have seen, this “ecclesialisation” actually leads to *personalisation*. Persons are constituted in the image of Trinitarian persons in relation to others *within the Body* of Christ, especially through reception of the Eucharist. Through insertion into God’s life the creature finds an identity that surpasses his own vision for his life. This “loosing of life” does not mean that one loses one’s creativity, but merely that finite conceptions of this creativity are transformed. Being a member of the Body the Church does not de-personalise as does a false collectivity based on an ideology. Rather, through the sharing the bread of life, the “bread of immortality,” individuals become personalised in Christ and in the Body and their creative uniqueness is transformed through participation in God’s life-giving creative power. This is illustrated in a particular way in women’s lives, where their physical capacity to give life as mothers is transformed and raised to a new level of life-giving as a personalising force within society. This force is not only that of being a spiritual mother, but also of living *being-in-relation* in a way that is completely integrative of body and soul. While physically they experience motherhood through relating to their child in the womb and through nurturing them after birth, this gift of physical motherhood also has the sacramental form of bearing God’s love to the world. Hence being a mother is also a sign of the life-giving ecclesial person in the world yet all persons in the Church share in this life-giving form spiritually through sharing in Mary’s motherhood.

As well as discovering creativity in communion with God and others, persons also discover their *unique* giftedness in relation to God and others. God bestows many gifts natural and supernatural and through insertion into Christ’s life the natural gifts are *transformed*, not lost as the modern man fears. Moreover these gifts are called upon by others in the community of persons and in this way man develops his talents and ultimately his own self. This transformed uniqueness is a prophetic vision to the world urging it on to its fulfilment in a destiny beyond itself. Hence the ecclesial person finds fulfilled identity through insertion into Christ’s *mission* in relation to others in the ecclesial community and the world.

Man’s experience of relationships with his fellow men today has unfortunately been characterised by the “will to power,” where through a flawed understanding of human nature, he distrusts that he can experience relationships of mutual communion. Instead he oppresses others, - especially those who are weaker and don’t conform to the world’s understanding of what is powerful - in an attempt to cling to his own

construction of himself. By contrast, Christianity, symbolised in Mary, reveals that relationships of communion *are* possible and that grace transforms men constituting them as equally loved children of God and not by worldly classifications, which divide and oppress. Children of God are characterised rather by the *power of God* which both expands their own identity and God's identity through their glorification of him in their lives.

Modernity's understanding of man is that he can only live a life that is *unique* and different through independence and *assertion* of that difference through power and even violence and killing of others. Since contemporary society has hence been constructed around the premise that there is no common human nature, hence that society is merely an unfortunate collectivity and false plurality of those who assert their differences. The Church offers the alternative image of a communion of personalised individuals finding their uniqueness through sharing their *common identity* as children of God which in fact is common human nature in its fulfilled essence. Hence it is truly a sign and instrument of communion to worldly society.⁴³²

In this thesis I have presented man's true identity as that of a being-in-relation to God and others in the image of the Trinity, an identity found through insertion into Christ's life through the Church. This is the alternative vision to modernity's understanding of man characterised by disembodiment, independence, a false sense of freedom and uniqueness sought apart from others. I have presented Mary on the other hand as *the* graced creature, *the* model of the redeemed in Christ, in the Church. I would hope that reclaiming Mary as the model of the human person opens up new avenues for evangelisation of modern culture in order to present the Church as the place where man can find himself as authentically free, creative, unique and fulfilled. The world is greatly in need of love and communion in a way that personalises individuals and leads to the full flowering of human identity. Too often in the past, the Church's presentation of herself has not been life-giving for those within her and has led to a conformity rather than to communion for fear that encouraging uniqueness and talent might lead to pride. Of course this is ever a danger and man's flawed nature is always evident even in his present transformation in Christ. Christ and Mary

⁴³² I am not advocating that the Church communion replace civil society in a type of Christendom, but nevertheless the Church's role as the sign and instrument of communion is a necessary prophetic role as the protector and safeguard of man's inviolable dignity as made for communion with God and others.

however are models of the human person not in a way that emphasises the difference between them and all human beings, but in a way that uplifts human identity and offers a new vision of transformed existence through sharing in the resurrected life. Mary as the creature full of grace reveals what can happen when man is fully transformed through the sacraments and life in the Church and yet lives fully as a creature in the midst of creaturely existence. Living as a new creature, the ecclesial person brings Christ's life to the world and offers hope and vision to men who are waiting for this sign of their destiny. Working and living in the world, among fellow creatures, in professional, social and technical spheres, persons in the Church witness to the truth that human beings are made for more than the material world and can find their rest and identity only in the love of God. New creatures in Christ are thus signs of Christ's unconditional and free love to the world. The love they share is not a vague spiritual love or merely confined to those in the Church but is a *fully human* love, embodied and expressed in service of others, especially the weak and vulnerable. Through finding their identity in Christ, they are *freed from* themselves and from slavery to solipsistic and fruitless autonomy in order to be *freed for* others.

The marks of the ecclesial person as sacrament of Christ are: peace in fulfilment in Christ, joy from knowing they are unconditionally loved by God and having accepted this love sharing it with others; freedom in the midst of secular life and its circumstances, which are all modes of uniting the creature to God, since one is inserted into his plan; hope, since life is more than the material and has a destiny which completes it; great love and desire for all creatures to experience their own essence as being-in-relation to God and find their unique identities in Christ. Mary is *the* embodiment of that person reflecting the glory of God through spousal union with him which leads to a complete spiritual kenosis. Reflecting Christ to the world means a witness of personalisation revealed in paradoxes. Hence Ecclesial persons are virginally receptive in order to be motherly fruitful; de-privatised in communion order to be personalised; expropriated of self in order to be appropriated in Christ. This paradoxical image of the human being is the form of *personalisation* represented by the *feminine-sacramental* dimension of the Church.

Through meditating on Mary as we have done in this paper, we discover the model of the human person as free, made for God and for others and with a purpose that transcends the self and leads it on to the fullness of identity. Mary is both the *sign*

of this identity and the *only means* that God has chosen to bring it about. In Christianity, signs and models are not merely beyond us, but are realities in which we actually *partake*. Hence Christians do not merely imitate Mary and aspire to her greatness, but through her in the Church, persons are actually moulded in her form of receptivity to grace and simultaneously become bearers of Christ's life.

Models and measures of human greatness are necessary for man who naturally aspires to fulfil his nature. Surely by giving God our *aspirations* to live the fullness of personhood, we are giving him a heart that calls on his mercy so that filling it with his grace, he can do the rest and begin the his work of transformation, until the fullness of personhood is found as full communion with all creatures through sharing in his divine life, revealed at the eschaton. In the meantime ecclesial persons can point efficaciously to that destiny through their very humanity, which draws God's transforming power ever closer.

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