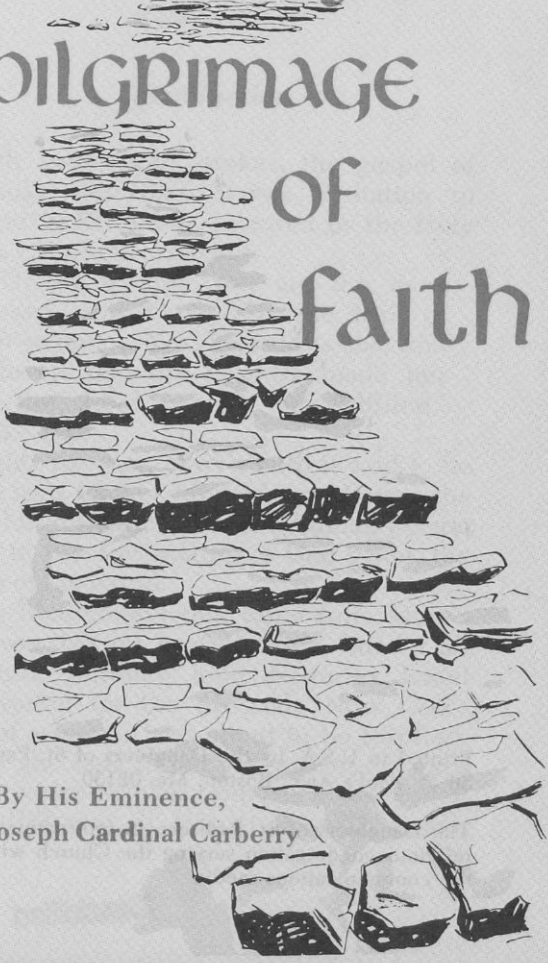


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MARY'S
PILGRIMAGE
OF
FAITH

By His Eminence,
John Joseph Cardinal Carberry

Printed in U.S.A. by the Daughters of St. Paul
50 St. Paul's Ave., Boston, Ma. 02130

The Daughters of St. Paul are an international
religious congregation serving the Church with
the communications media.

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Address to Pontifical International Marian Congress
at Zagreb, 1971.

Introduction

With swift, bold strokes, the gospel of St. Luke describes Mary's Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth cried out:

"Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.... Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Luke 1:42).

In this passage, Mary's faith is said to be the reason for her blessedness. It was the contribution which she as a human person made to the Incarnation of God's Son, the Savior of the world.

The blessedness that came from Mary's faith was not for herself alone, but for all mankind. Through long centuries Israel had waited for the Messiah. Now God's plan of salvation was about to be fulfilled. Hence she sang in her *Magnificat* of God's mercy which reaches from age to age and of the fulfillment of His promise to Israel:

“He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy—according to the promise he made to our ancestors—of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Luke 1:54).

Centuries later, the Fathers of Vatican Council II declared that Mary was not used by God in a merely passive way, but cooperated in the work of human salvation through free faith and obedience. They summarized this doctrine in the quotation from St. Irenaeus: “What the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, Mary loosened by her faith.” Describing the union of Mother and Son in the work of salvation from the time of Christ’s conception to His death, the Council uses the remarkable phrase: “Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross” (cf. *The Church*, no. 56-59).

What is faith?

In such passages, the term “faith” is taken in its full Biblical meaning. It signifies not merely an act of the intellect, but

a full surrender of the person to God. When we say that Mary "believed," we mean that Mary not only accepted what God said as true, but that she gave herself to Him entirely—mind and will, body and soul—in order that in her His will might be fulfilled.

Mary and Abraham

Mary stands at the beginning of the New Covenant, as Abraham stood at the beginning of the Old. The primary quality which the Scripture selects as fitting both Mary and Abraham for their sublime mission was precisely this quality of faith.

As the Bible depicts in vivid imagery, after the Fall men turned away from God. They sank into sins of idolatry, murder and lust. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that the thoughts of his heart fashioned nothing but wickedness all day long" (Gen. 6:5).

After long centuries in which men lived "in darkness and the shadow of death," God broke into human history to reveal His plan of salvation. The man He chose to inaugurate this plan was Abraham and the response that He demanded of him was faith. Abraham was commanded to leave his country and his father's house to depart



from his family and friends, to break off his old loyalties, to separate from all that was familiar to him in order to go into a strange land and begin a new way of life.

Believing the word which God spoke to him, Abraham gave himself and all he had entirely to God, trusting in His promise: "In your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Acts 3:25). So unshakable was his faith, that he was prepared at God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac. Hence he was chosen by St. Paul as the model of faith:

"Though it seemed Abraham's hope could not be fulfilled, he hoped and he believed, and through doing so he did become the father of many nations exactly as he had been promised: *Your descendants will be as many as the stars*. Even the thought that his body was past fatherhood—he was about a hundred years old—and Sarah was too old to become a mother, did not shake his belief. Since God has promised it, Abraham refused either to deny it or even to doubt it, but drew strength from faith and gave glory to God, convinced that God has power to do what he had promised. This is the faith that was *considered as justifying him*" (Rom. 4:18).

Mary at the Annunciation

When we compare the Scripture accounts of God's revelation to Abraham that a son is to be born to him and the angel's message to Mary at the Annunciation, we are struck by the close parallel between them.

—In each there is a message from God:

To Abraham: "God appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent" (Gen. 18:1).

To Mary: "The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26).

—Each is assured of God's favor:

To Abraham: "I beg you, if I find favor with you, kindly do not pass your servant by" (Gen. 18:3).

To Mary: "Do not be afraid; you have won God's favor" (Luke 1:31).

—The birth of a son is announced:

To Abraham: "I shall visit you again next year without fail, and your wife will then have a son" (Gen. 18:10).

To Mary: "You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus" (Luke 1:31).

—The question arises: How is this to be?

With Abraham's wife: "Am I really going to have a child now that I am old?" (Gen. 18:12)

With Mary: "How can this come about, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34)

— The answer is found in God's omnipotence:

Abraham: "Is anything too wonderful for God?" (Gen. 18:14)

Mary: "Nothing is impossible to God" (Luke 1:37).

Sarah was old and barren; Mary a virgin. Hence in each case a child would be conceived and born by a special act of God's power. This makes it clear that salvation is not from man, but from God.

This theme runs throughout the Bible. The men who are to lead Israel to salvation are born by a special intervention of God. So Isaac was born of Sarah in her old age; Jacob of Rebecca who till then was barren; Joseph of Rachel who had bewailed her sterility. Samuel, too, was born in answer to the prayer of Hannah, and Samson of a woman who had not been able to bear children.

The same idea is expressed in the prophecy of Isaiah to Ahaz, King of Judah: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is. 7:14). Matthew, 1:23, in the New Testament sees in this text a prophecy of

the birth of Jesus, who is truly Emmanuel, which is interpreted, "God with us."

The response of faith

Mary's part in the Incarnation is not merely physical but a free response in faith to God's offer of salvation to man. Karl Rahner writes:

"This consent in faith derives its greatness and its significance in the divine plan of redemption from the fact to which it refers, the divine motherhood. But because this divine motherhood is described from the start not as a merely physical occurrence, but as taking place through a free, personal, grace-inspired act of faith, the whole mysterious event is at once singled out from a mere private destiny, a biographical relationship of Mary to Jesus, her Son, and inserted into the history of faith and redemption" (*Mary Mother of the Lord*, p. 55).

Mary offers this decisive act of faith not merely as a private person, but on behalf of all who believe in God's Word. She is the "Daughter of Zion," reflecting the faith of the Old Testament in the Messiah to come. She also represents the Church

of the New Testament, rejoicing in the unfathomable riches which Christ has brought to men.

As daughter of her people, Mary responds to the divine initiative with that same faith which God had always demanded of Israel. Because Abraham believed God, he became the father of God's people. Through faith in God's Word, spoken to him from the burning bush, Moses led the Israelites out of the slavery of Egypt. Through faith in God's power, Gideon with a handful of men overcame the enemies of Israel. Strengthened by faith, David slew Goliath. So it was through all the history of Israel. God was always at hand to deliver His people; but He demanded from them that faith which acknowledges their complete dependence upon Him, who alone was able to save them.

As Daughter of Zion, Mary gave expression to her total faith and obedience to God's will in those most sublime words that have ever fallen from purely human lips: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

However, Mary is not only the embodiment of the faith of the Old Testament, but also of the New. Vatican Council II declares:

“Mary is hailed as a pre-eminent and altogether singular member of the Church, and as the Church’s model and excellent exemplar in faith and charity” (*The Church*, no. 53).

At the moment of the Annunciation, Mary received the promise of God to establish a New Covenant through the blood of His Son. Because of her consent, the whole chain of redemptive acts began which has brought salvation to men through the ages. Max Thurian writes:

“The task of the believing Church is to continue through space and time the sponsal fiat of Mary, her whispered yes. This community of the redeemed has for vocation to cooperate in the work of redemption by loving faith, and so bring God to birth in the human frame. The Church, therefore, is a collective Mary, and Mary is the Church in germ” (*Mary, Mother of All Christians*, p. 61).

Mary sums up in herself the faith of Israel in the Messiah who was to be born of the House of David. But Mary’s faith is more than this. For she has learned the identity of the Messiah. Her faith bears directly on Christ. Hence her faith is that of the New Testament, which completes and perfects the faith of ancient Israel.

As Father Galot says so beautifully: "Therefore, we may say that *the faith of the Church is born in the soul of Mary*" (*Mary in the Gospel*, p. 53).

This position of Mary as representative of Israel and as type of the Church is stated by Vatican II:

"She stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently await and receive salvation from Him. With her, the exalted Daughter of Zion, and after long expectation of the promise, the times were at length fulfilled and the new dispensation established. All this occurred when the Son of God took a human nature from her, that He might in the mysteries of His flesh free man from sin" (*The Church*, no. 55).

Mary grows in faith

Of course, it is not meant to imply that at the moment of the Annunciation, Mary knew all the details of God's plan of salvation. During her life Mary walked in the light of faith, not in the light of vision. Her faith grew and deepened both in her adherence to God's Word and in her understanding of its content. Like all of us,

Mary walked step by step on her pilgrimage of faith.

We cannot be certain of the extent of Mary's knowledge of the divine plan at each stage of her life. For we do not know what God chose to make known to her either by direct revelation or by infused knowledge. Certainly, like every devout Jew, Mary knew the Scriptures through and through. Quite surely too, because of her sublime holiness, her freedom from concupiscence and the illumination given her by the Holy Spirit, Mary penetrated most deeply into the meaning of God's Word. She was not among those who could be reproved for being "slow to believe the full message of the prophets" (Luke 24:25).

Mary's life revolved around one central theme. She had given her consent to become the Mother of Jesus, who was the Messiah who would save God's people and rule over them forever. She sustained that act of faith constantly throughout her life. She submitted with serene faith to all the events that came to her from the hand of God, even those that she did not understand.

Indeed, there were many things which Mary did not understand. For she did not know the future nor the precise manner

in which the redemption was to be accomplished.

In response to the angel's message, she asked: "How shall this be done?" Mary's question was not the expression of a lack of faith. It was a simple request for enlightenment about the part she was to play.

When the shepherds came across the hills to Bethlehem, St. Luke tells us:

"They repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what they had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:18).

At the presentation in the temple, Mary stood there wondering at the things that were being said about Him. Simeon said to her:

"You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected—and a sword will pierce your soul too" (Luke 2:33).

Then there was that mysterious time when Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. For three days Mary and Joseph searched for Him. When they finally found Him in the temple, Mary uttered an anguished mother's cry: "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your

father and I have been, looking for you.” When Jesus answered that He must be about His Father’s affairs, the Scripture comments: “They did not understand what he meant” (Luke 2:50).

It was on Calvary, however, that Mary came to full realization of the stark demands of faith. In one short sentence, the Gospel tells us: “Beneath the cross of Jesus stood his mother, Mary,” But that sentence is poignant with the greatest sorrow this world has ever known. Contemplating the greatness of Mary’s grief, the Church applies to her the words of the prophet Jeremiah: “To what shall I liken you, to what shall I compare you, O virgin Daughter of Zion? For great as the sea is your sorrow!” Nevertheless, in the greatness of her faith, Mary offered to God her greatest sacrifice, the life of her Son. This was the final climax of the consent she had long before given as her share in the work of redemption: “Be it done to me according to your word.”

Lessons for today

Vatican Council II declares:

“This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which

she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross. This maternity will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect" (*The Church*, no. 62).

Mary is the spiritual mother of all who are called to eternal life in Christ Jesus; at the same time, she is the perfect model of a living faith for us who live in the world today.

Receive the word of God

Faith is a free gift of God. It is an infused virtue, that is, an interior act which man can perform only under the influence of divine grace. Faith is also described as a personal experience, an "inner light," an I-Thou encounter with God. At the same time, it is an acceptance of God's Word, a receiving of the message of salvation made known to us through Jesus Christ and guarded and preserved by the Church which He founded to carry on the work of redemption. It is precisely in the revealed Word of God, consigned to the Scriptures and interpreted by the Church that we encounter Christ and enter into personal communion with Him.

St. Paul states that faith comes through hearing: "They will not believe in him unless they have heard of him, and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher" (Rom. 10:14). The Christian receives this apostolic preaching as the Word of God and, under the impulse of grace, gives his interior assent.

What is it that, as Christians, we believe? St. Paul summarizes the content of the faith:

"Brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you...I taught you what I had been taught myself, namely, that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; and that he was raised to life on the third day" (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Faith means to hear and to accept God's message of redemption in Christ.

We who live today do not enjoy the immediate, concrete experience of the person of Christ which the apostles possessed before the Resurrection. What we receive is the apostolic testimony concerning Christ. This testimony is preserved and proclaimed by the Church to whom Christ gave the commission to preach the Gospel in His name. We who are faithful Catholics find, in obedience to Christ's Church,

unity, security and the certainty of doing God's will. For Christ has said: "He that hears you hears me" (Luke 10:16).

All of us who have received the immense treasure of faith must guard it and pass it on to the generations who will come after us. We must love God's Church; we must listen to her teachings; we must be faithful to the laws which, as the mother of men's souls, she finds necessary for our guidance along the way of salvation.

Only through the Church can we find security and certainty about the meaning and destiny of our human lives. Only through the Church can we know for sure what God wills us to believe and to do in order to attain salvation. Without the Church, religion becomes merely a matter of opinion and conjecture, with no man having any assurance as to what is true and false.

St. Catherine of Siena used to call the Church "the dear Christ on earth." The Church is Christ, living and working in the members of His Mystical Body through the ages. As we have love and loyalty for Christ, so we also must have love and loyalty for His Church.

Through our assent in faith to God's Word made known to us through His Church, Christ is born in our hearts, as He became

incarnate in Mary's womb in response to her assent of faith at the Annunciation.

Witness to our faith

It is not enough that we receive God's Word through faith; we must also witness to that faith in our lives. This is not easy, particularly in our modern secularistic world. Christ warned us that those who serve Him will suffer persecution: "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me before you.... If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too" (John 15:18).

The first witness we must give to our faith in Christ is that of a blameless life. Vatican Council II declares:

"Faith needs to prove its fruitfulness by penetrating the believer's entire life, including its worldly dimensions, and by activating him toward justice and love, especially regarding the needy" (*The Church Today*, no. 21).

Toward a better world

A Christian's life of faith must pour forth in loving actions for the welfare of his fellow men. In this way, he disposes unbelievers to receive the faith and enter the fold of Christ.

Vatican II brings out clearly the duty of Christians to become involved in the problems of mankind: "Far from turning us away from our earthly task, our adhesion to Christ in faith commits us totally to the service of our brethren."

Today the Church—under the leadership of the Pope and the bishops, together with priests and religious and the devoted laity—wishes to enter into dialogue with the modern world. Her purpose is the same as that of Jesus Christ, who declared that He had come "not to judge but to save the world." The mission of the Church and of each individual Christian is one of loving service to mankind, so that all men may live in peace and harmony on earth and reach God's eternal kingdom.

The modern secularized world is beset with many problems because it has turned away from God. The grievous social ills which afflict human society today—such as poverty, exploitation of workers, racism and war—are the consequences of incorrect moral attitudes. To correct such problems, men need the light of divine wisdom and the help of divine grace. Only in religion can we find a true and solid foundation for the value and worth of the individual human being. Only with the help of divine grace can men find strength to overcome

their selfishness and to fulfill the obligations of justice, brotherhood and love which should guide their conduct toward their fellow men.

Throughout the documents of Vatican II, Mary is presented as the example of this openness, this receptivity to God which modern man so greatly needs. Vatican II describes her as the outstanding one "among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently await and receive salvation from Him" (*The Church*, no. 55).

The Council speaks of Mary's "pilgrimage of faith." This means that she walked through life as on a journey to God, giving herself completely to Him and trusting that in her His mighty plan of salvation would be fulfilled.

In this Mary is the type of the pilgrim Church which ever exists in openness to God, looking toward the fulfillment of Christ's redemption, when our Lord and Savior will come in all His glory to gather all those who have believed in Him and bring them to His Father, in order that God may be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). It is our hope that on that blessed day we will sing with Mary the eternal *Magnificat*, praising God who looked upon our lowliness and made us His children through Christ.

The first part of the book is devoted to a general introduction to the subject of the history of the English language. The author discusses the various influences that have shaped the language over time, including the contributions of Old English, Middle English, and Modern English. He also touches upon the role of dialects and the process of language change.

The second part of the book is a detailed study of the history of the English language from the beginning of the 15th century to the present. The author examines the changes in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation that have taken place over the centuries. He also discusses the influence of other languages on English, particularly French and Latin.

The third part of the book is a study of the history of the English language in the United States. The author discusses the development of American English and the influence of other languages on it. He also touches upon the role of the media and the internet in the spread of American English.

The fourth part of the book is a study of the history of the English language in the British Empire. The author discusses the spread of English as a world language and the influence of other languages on it. He also touches upon the role of the British Empire in the development of English as a world language.

The fifth part of the book is a study of the history of the English language in the Commonwealth of Nations. The author discusses the development of English as a world language and the influence of other languages on it. He also touches upon the role of the Commonwealth of Nations in the development of English as a world language.

The sixth part of the book is a study of the history of the English language in the world. The author discusses the development of English as a world language and the influence of other languages on it. He also touches upon the role of the world in the development of English as a world language.

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