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MATER COMMUNIONIS:
Pope Paul's Proclamation of the Mother of the Church and the Ecclesiology of Vatican II

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In the process of selecting a topic for a thesis, one generally moves from broad to specific. So it was regarding the topic of this work. «The Mariology of Pope Paul VI» was an initial provisional topic to be further specified.

When theologians think of Pope Paul’s mariology, they do not think immediately of his pronouncement of Our Lady to be the Mother of the Church, and the specific thesis topics that were suggested to me never had as their object Mater Ecclesiae. Many suggested, on the contrary, that if I wanted to research the most important part of Pope Paul’s thought on Mary, I should work on his Apostolic Exhortation, Marialis cultus.

Why, then, did I choose «Mother of the Church?» The answer lies in the hierarchy of truth. Everything in creation admits of grades, grades of being, of goodness, of beauty, of importance. I do not mean to say that some truths are more true than others, but there exists an «order of seniority» in truth. Less basic truths depend on more basic ones. The explanation of color depends on the explanation of light. The morality of specific human actions depends on our more basic understanding of the make-up of man.

The importance for the life of the Church of Marialis cultus cannot be questioned. In that document, the Pope teaches the centrality that Mary should have in the life of the Church. He rescues our acts of love for Mary from the realm of the extra-liturgical, and puts them in the heart of the institutional and sacramental worship of the Church.

But I think that Marialis cultus presupposes and is founded on even more basic teachings of the Church. It presupposes, for example, the teaching of the Council of Ephesus. Mary would not hold the place that she does in Christ’s liturgy if she were not his mother. Mary’s unique place in the worship of the Church also presupposes that she has a special relationship with the Church. Here we see the importance of Mater Ecclesiae. Who
Mary is determines what we do in our relationship with her. The nature of her relationship to the Church —her ecclesial maternity— determines how the Church as a whole is to praise her. Let us eschew «Cartesian Christianity.» Primary is the object, secondary the subject. Being comes before both knowing and doing, and Pope Paul tells us that Mary is Mother of the Church.

With the definition of Mary as the Mother of the Church early in his pontificate, the Pope lays a foundation in dogmatic theology from which mariologists, ecclesiologists, spiritual theologians, liturgists and anthropologists can draw their respective conclusions.

Our doctoral thesis examines the history of the title in sacred tradition and the bible. We also look at the divided state of mariology before and during the Second Vatican Council as necessary historical orientations to understand Pope Paul’s motivation. This excerpt of the thesis will omit some of that background, but the central question of the thesis is recorded here: what is the theological content of the title. How does the Pope explain that an individual woman can be the Mother of the Church and what does that teach us about her, about the Church, and about the economy of salvation.

One great teaching confirmed by the title is that the Church is an intimate, mystical communion united to the Trinity through Christ. A cornerstone of Vatican II’s pedagogy is the ecclesiology of communio. Mary seals that communion as Mater Ecclesiae. (Omitted here as well will be our lengthy appendix on the nature of the Church as a communion.)

My work has been facilitated by many. To my thesis director, Father Juan Luis Bastero; to all of the professors of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Navarre; to my grandparents whose generosity made these studies possible; to my spiritual father and religious superior, James Flanagan; to my bishop, Rene Gracida; to my parents—to all of you I express my heart-felt gratitude. Our Lady is our Mother; may she keep us united to her Son in the heart of the Church.
Ad Beatae Virginis gloriam ad nostrumque solacium, Mariam Sanctissimam declaramus Matrem Ecclesiae, hoc est totius populis christiani, tam fidelium quam Pastorum, qui eam Matrem amantissimam appellant; ac statuimus ut suavissimo hoc nomine iam nunc universus christianus populus magis adhuc honorem Deiparae tribuat eique supplicationes adhibeat.

With these words pronounced within the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council by Paul, Vicar of Christ and Successor of Peter, Mary was formally recognized as the Mother of the Church.

Why? Rome never speaks formally without a serious motive. Why *Mater Ecclesiae*? The question of why the Pope proclaimed Mary to be the Mother of the Church is especially interesting considering the very formal way in which he did so and considering the opposition to his proclamation.

In our quest to answer this question, we uncover the doctrinal importance of Mary's maternity regarding the Church. Since the proclamation was made formally and in the context of an ecumenical council, there is no question that it was meant to be binding pedagogy. Paul's discourse was not extemporaneous; his intention was not whimsical. He directed his teaching to the entire Church on a matter of faith.

Hierarchical pedagogy, however, does not appear *ex nihilo*. The vicars of Christ always work from the precedents set in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Why, then, did Pope Paul formalize this relationship between Mary and the Church? Without a doubt, because the spirit so moved him—the Holy Spirit. But also because, from the Faith, he read the «signs of the times.» Pope Paul VI's proclamation of Mary, *Mater Ecclesiae*, is a response to the needs of the Church in this age, an application
of the timeless Deposit of Faith to our particular age. How does Mary’s new title reflect modern man? How could it? Is it that modern man understands and lives the truth of Mary as Mother of the Church? Is the Holy Father confirming and approving a reality that has been lived for years? Is dogma catching up to praxis, or is it that, from the Faith, the Pope has seen an impoverished aspect of human existence? Perhaps late twentieth century man, in particular, needs to begin to see her as Mother of the Church. Answers to these questions will appear gradually as we unravel the reason for, and the history and content of the proclamation.

The second over-arching question asked here will involve that content. «What?» was a central question in the thesis. What, firstly, did the Pope mean to teach about Mary and the Church with the proclamation? And secondly, what theological content does the title itself contain—even beyond what might have been the understanding of Pope Paul.

To answer these questions, I examine the history of the proclamation itself and also the history of the use of the title (and the concept) of Mary, Mother of the Church. I rely in many cases on living witnesses who recount the progress of mariology as they have seen it from the 1950’s to the 1990’s. In other cases I refer to the official Acts of the Second Vatican Council which record without editorial commentary the ecclesiological and mariological drama that marks the twentieth century.

The thesis, then, is grounded in history. I also reveal the exponential growth in papal magisterium on this topic. I attempt to show how connected the title Mater Ecclesiae is to the truth and tradition lived by Catholics. I spend more energy uncovering the passions pro and con regarding the title on the part of recent prelates and popes. Finally, I spend yet more space connecting the title, «Mother of the Church», to the living Church today in her understanding of herself as a communion.

Each chapter of the thesis aimed for one objective: to bring dogma to life. Calling Mary, «Mother of the Church» is not the verbal equivalent of placing a polyester rose at the feet of a plaster statue of Mary. It is not even a papal attempt to impress us into a greater devotion for Mary. The title is a profound dogmatic truth. It expresses, concisely, deep theological realities.
Which is to say: this title is real. My most important objective has been to point out the reality of this Marian-ecclesial relationship, and consequently its importance for every member of the Church.

The first three chapters of the thesis provide the theological, historical and social context necessary to begin to answer the question «why?»—which in turn helps us to see the importance of the proclamation.

Chapter One reviews the state of speculative mariology at the time of the Second Vatican Council. How did the «treasure new» of the thought of expert scholars on Our Lady influence the Holy Father? Is his proclamation an assimilation of their thought or a correction of it?

Chapter Two reaches into the «treasure old» of previous papal magisterium on the subject of Mary, Mother of the Church, as well as uncovering the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and of later saints and scholars on the subject.

Chapter Three deals with what Vatican Council II said about Our Lady and the Church and with the Council Fathers’ mixed understandings of and desires for the ecclesial maternity. Chapter Four looks at some proposed and partial explanations for the proclamation.

Chapter Five returns to the deep theological content of the Marian-ecclesial teaching. We study how Pope Paul VI himself explained Mary’s maternal relationship with the Church, and we draw some ecclesial implications from the Pope’s teachings on the Mother of the Church. Here, in the writings of Pope Paul, we find a connection between the Mother of the Church and the Church as a communion.

Our thesis is that the great importance of the title, «Mother of the Church», lies in the great anthropological and soteriological truths that it affirms and promotes. The title is not Marian for Mary’s sake; it teaches us about the universal economy of salvation. It teaches us about humanity and humanity’s point of contact with the Savior. It teaches us, specifically, that Christians are saved only in communio, that is, in the communion of the Church through communion with God.
That Mary is the Mother of the Church tells us precisely how real and how familial that *communio* is. There is great hope in this for alienated, lonely modern man; for not only is he reminded of the solidarity lived in the Body of Christ, but he comes to know the maternal care of she who promotes an ever more intense solidarity.

Our tripartite Appendix to the thesis is necessary for the reader to grasp precisely the height, the breadth and the intensity of that *communio* which Our Lady has made possible and continues to foster. In the Appendix we tackle the second half of the binomial, «*Mater Ecclesiae.*» To speak of the Mother of the Church obviously requires some discussion of the Church. And the vision that Pope Paul had of the Church when he proclaimed Mary to be its Mother was, of course, the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. (He made the Marian proclamation in the same discourse in which he ratified the conciliar Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium.*)

The Council saw the Church primarily in terms of *communio.* As Pope John Paul has said, the ecclesiology of communion «is the central and fundamental idea of the Council’s documents.» We examine, therefore, the ecclesiology of Vatican Two in terms of communion in the first section of the Appendix. In section two we examine the vertical dimension of communion: ecclesial communion from Trinitarian communion. And in the final section, we study some elements of the horizontal communion lived in the Church under the maternal solicitude of Our Lady.

The segment of the thesis which follows corresponds to the fourth and fifth chapters of the doctoral thesis. The divisions in mariology before the Council, the history of the title in Tradition and in the debates of the Second Vatican Council, and the appendix on the ecclesiology of the Council do not appear in the following excerpt. But what follows is the central segment of the thesis, the segment in which we answer, to the best of our ability, the questions of why Pope Paul made the proclamation and what were his motives.

We hope this study will shed some light on redemption, on the point where nature meets grace. Our hope is that by studying Mary as the Mother of the Church, we can learn more about
ourselves and see ourselves more as God sees us, in order to live more effectively in accord with our God-given nature and calling. Our contention is that this can be done in a new way within the context of Catholic scholarship by seeing Mary, Mother of the Church, as «Mater Communionis.»
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ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>AAS</td>
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<td>DS</td>
<td><em>Enchiridion symbolorum,</em> editors: H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer.</td>
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MATER COMMUNIONIS:
Pope Paul’s Proclamation of the Mother of the Church and the Ecclesiology of Vatican II

I. THE PROCLAMATION AND THE REACTION

An ecumenical council can neither meet nor teach authoritatively without the blessing of the Vicar of Christ. When the Constitution on the Church came to the end of its redactory road, to enter into effect, the signature of a pope was needed. Pope Paul was the representative of Christ who would ascend the podium to promulgate the document formally in the name of the Most Holy Trinity. He did so on November 21, 1964. But he did not merely promulgate the document as it was handed to him. He used his «executive privilege» as the successor of St. Peter to complete the document. He took the step that the Council had not seen fit to take: he proclaimed Mary to be the Mother of the Church.

Tempers flared at this action. Pope Paul had announced at a general audience on November 18 that he would make the proclamation¹, so some of the Council Fathers knew what was in store for them on the day of the solemn closing of the third session. Many, no doubt, thought that the Holy Father was overriding the Council and even that he was destroying some of their careful ecumenical work and conciliatory precautions.

Perhaps that partly explains the description of the entrance procession which appeared on the front page of the St. Louis Review: «As Pope Paul was carried into St. Peter’s on his sedia gestatoria [portable throne], he passed between the two rows of 2,100 stonily silent bishops. No applause from the bishops’ stalls greeted him. Even as the Pope made a simple blessing sign, only one in ten of the bishops crossed themselves. Newsmen witnessing the scene double-checked with each other about what they were seeing»².
Of course, the canonization of *Mater Ecclesiae* that the Pope was about to effect was only one of the reasons for the tension in St. Peter’s Basilica. The entire week preceding the proclamation had been marked by papal decisions and interventions which had disappointed bishops. First, and most importantly, Pope Paul had insisted that a Preliminary Explanatory Note be given to each Council Father regarding collegiality. When the Fathers voted on Chapter III of *Lumen Gentium*, they were to understand the text as it was clarified in the papal Note. Second was the Pope’s insistence that the vote on the Declaration on Religious Freedom be postponed until the following session. Third, Pope Paul intervened at the last minute to modify the text on ecumenism in several ways.

Now, the «coup de grâce»—the Pope had decided to settle a theological debate which the Council had expressly decided not to settle. The papal proclamation may even have come as a shock to some. Wiltgen asserts that the Pope’s «forewarning» on November 18 had gone largely unnoticed. For those who hoped that the Second Vatican Council would change radically (or had already changed!) the way that the hierarchy functions, for those who assumed that the Pope, in the new age of collegiality, could no longer act autonomously, this had been a rough week indeed. Resentment and exaggeration marked many of the news media accounts of the week’s events. The *St. Louis Review* voiced the complaints of certain bishops and *periti* by publishing that «the granting of the title, Mother of the Church, to Mary by the Pope’s words on Saturday was in direct contradiction to the will of the majority of the Fathers». Little wonder that the Dutch representation at the Council dubbed this week «Black Week!».

After the solemn offering of the sacrifice of the Mass that fateful Saturday morning and after the formal promulgation of the Constitution on the Church and the other documents that had been finished during the third session, came the moment of truth: the closing address by the Holy Father. It was indeed a moment of truth, not only because the truth of Mary’s maternity over the Church was set forth clearly and authoritatively, but also because of the reaction of the Fathers to the words pronounced. Pope Paul, half way through his discourse, unveiled the theological
«statue», and even he could not have been sure what the reaction would be. He told the Fathers that he had determined that the closing act of the session would be the most appropriate time for the teaching that he would now affirm. Then he pronounced the irretractable words: *Mariam Sanctissimam declaramus Matrem Ecclesiae*.

Thundered the applause! A standing ovation greeted the Pope’s words. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of unity in the Church, had shown himself more powerful than the spirit of division that had divided the Fathers on this issue. His address was interrupted seven times by applause, which increased in intensity as the address continued. Some bishops remained ill-pleased, without a doubt; but the teaching Church had spoken that day, primarily through the mouth of Peter and, happily, through the assent of the episcopal college.

II. THE CONTEXTUAL EXPLANATION

Why did Pope Paul proclaim Mary to be Mother of the Church? That the Pope risked alienating many bishops with the proclamation gives him less reason for making it. What could have motivated the gamble?

Here we will simply explore the immediate historical context of the proclamation. Richer will be the study in the following units of the theological significance of the title and the *post factum* historical vindication of the same. We will enter the more speculative ground of what deep theological reasoning was behind the proclamation (and even what theological significance is implicit in the title but might not have been fully understood by the Pope), and we will explore the ways in which the title has been understood and employed in the nearly thirty years since its proclamation. But for now we limit ourselves to the empirical and historical up till November of 1964. The explanations in this section will be incomplete, but they are worthy of our attention.

Father Gerard Philips, the professor at Lovaine who was so instrumental in the composition of all of the Constitution on the Church and especially of the chapter on Mary, has some thoughts on the motivations of Papa Paolo. In his two volume commen-
tary on the history and contents of *Lumen Gentium*, he gives three reasons for the papal proclamation:

1. It was meant to reaffirm the validity of ordinary papal magisterium. 2. The proclamation was a personal act of piety by the Pope. 3. It was a concession to the Council Fathers who wanted the title in the document.

We think there is some truth in each of these possible motivations, but neither singly nor when tallied do they fully explain the gamble. Let us examine Philips’ first assertion.

**Papal Magisterium**

There was a real danger that the teaching on the Council regarding the power of the college of bishops be exaggerated. Just as after the First Vatican Council (which defined the infallibility of the popes) many had assumed that ecumenical councils would thenceforth be useless, so know, after the Second Vatican Council had spent so much effort and ink defining collegiality, there was a danger of a new overreaction. There was a danger that the magisterium of the hierarchy would only be obeyed insofar as it proceeded «democratically» from the entire body of the bishops.

Father Schillebeeckx, the Dutch theologian who was far from the most conservative at the Council, had himself complained about the unfair tactics of some bishops and periti. A member of the very Theological Commission had told him that, although the teaching on collegiality contained in the Constitution reflected a moderate view on collegiality, after the Council it would be interpreted in a more radical way.

Pope Paul definitively gave the Church a lesson on the structure of the hierarchy with the proclamation. He made it clear that the teaching of the Second Council of the Vatican must always be understood in the light of the First. Cardinal Montini had been a leader in the advocacy of a broad-minded new teaching on the divinely granted rights of the episcopacy, and he did not change his view when he was elected Pope. But neither did Paul want the Church to fall into a blinding unilateral view of the hierarchy. As Father Philips well says, «Vatican II has not transformed the pontifical monarchy into an episcopal oligar-
Neither of the two describes the Church. Both the supreme pastor and the college of bishops serve the Church for the glory of God and the salvation of souls—and both do so in their own distinctive and complementary fashions.

Pope Paul stood alone when he taught that Mary is Mother of the Church. He asked for no approval. He called for no vote. In fact, he knew that if he had, the title might have been voted down. He reaffirmed, therefore, the teaching contained in Pastor Aeternus, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Vatican I. «It is outside the truth)), write the Fathers of the First Vatican Council, to say that an ecumenical council is a superior authority to the Roman Pontiff». Pope Paul’s discourse, then, was not only Marian but also ecclesiological.

A Devotional Act

Paul VI’s desire to give this name to Our Lady, however, did not appear merely in “Black Week» as a way to correct a mistaken notion of papal authority. As Fr. Philips mentioned, the title was also the object of personal devotion of the Pope. After all, the Pope’s own words at the beginning of the proclamation are, “For the glory of the Blessed Virgin and our own consolation.” That Mary is “Mother of the faithful», as the Council had taught, does not necessarily involve the leaders of the Church because the word “faithful» sometimes signifies the laity in contradistinction from the clergy. Perhaps that is why the Pope in his address specified that Mary is both Mother of the faithful and of the bishops. Perhaps Paul acted here partly to humble himself and partly to direct all of the Council Fathers’ eyes, in humility, upward toward their heavenly Mother.

The proclamation was certainly an act of piety because it was certainly an act motivated by love of God and love of his Mother. But it was not a new devotion for the Pope, nor was it private. We can trace the ecclesial maternity even to Pope Paul’s days as the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. And, as we will see, if Giovanni Battista Montini had a love for Our Lady, Mother of the Church, it was more than a pious devotion that he held as personal.
In 1959, shortly after the announcement of the forthcoming Ecumenical Council, we hear for the first time from the lips of Giovanni Battista the intuition relating Mary in a maternal way to the Church. On the occasion of the consecration of Italy to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Cardinal ends a talk with a few words on the upcoming Council. He says that the Council will be the occasion for the Church to become more conscious of her catholicity and her unity and more conscious of her role in the middle of the world as the soul of the world. The event of the Council is without doubt grand and significant, says the Cardinal, but let us pray to the Mother of the Church that the Council will also edify «the people, the nation, the world, all of civilization and also each one of us».

Once the Council started, Cardinal Montini wrote to his faithful in an exhortation for the month of May asking them to keep in their prayers the work of the Ecumenical Council, and particularly that they commend the Council to the protection of Mary, the Mother of the Church. Worth recalling as well are the intervention at the Council by Cardinal Montini in 1962 and the words with which Pope Paul closed the second session in 1963, in both instances trying to convince the Fathers to include the title in the conciliar magisterium.

Not only does the Cardinal’s understanding of Mary’s part in salvation make her Mother of the Church, but his intuition also connects the Mother of the Church with the Council. The conviction that Mary, the Mother of the Church, can forge the unity in the Church especially needed in a conciliar age was far from a spur-of-the-moment one. By the time of the «moment of truth» on November 21, 1964, the reality had had five years to mature in the intellect of Giovanni Battista.

Ending the Stalemate

Marian theology immediately before the Council was divided, and this was the theology which would in turn influence the Marian thought within the Council. There were two approaches to Mary, the Christotypical and the Ecclesiotypical; two currents had flown into the Mariological Congress of Lourdes in 1958 and there they came to a standoff.
Many of the Fathers at the Council shared the theological positions of one or the other of those two schools. Therefore the pre-conciliar impasse became a conciliar impasse. There occurred a predictable simplification of the two positions, especially on the part of those who were not aware of the deep patristic and biblical basis for both. Jargon replaced full, nuanced truth. «Mother of the Church», in the hands of some, became a part of that jargon. *Mater Ecclesiae* became a slogan. The title was, for some, a reason to be more firmly entrenched in the Christotypical school and for others a reason to be more firmly Ecclesiotypical. The different positions even polarized geographically: the Mediterraneans in favor of the title and the Rhinelanders against.

Pope Paul broke the deadlock. He stepped boldly forward with the confidence of divine inspiration—so that theology could proceed on its course. He did not rule that one school had been wrong, and that we should all follow the «right» one. He did not drag Mary into the human fray by linking the reality of her maternity over the Church with any group of thinkers.

On the contrary, the Pope, with his proclamation on November 21, interceded to pull Mary from that intellectual melee. He interceded both for Mary and for mariology. We say he «interceded for Mary» because now her maternal *munus* toward the Church is a motive for greater love for her and not a cause of confusion. As he said within the closing speech, shortly after making the proclamation, «We trust that [due to the proclamation] the Christian people will be sure to call upon the most blessed Virgin with greater confidence and more fervent devotion and will show her the honor and devotion that is due her» 17.

He interceded for *mariology* by resolving the theological stalemate that had prevented growth in our understanding of Our Lady’s part in salvation. Pope Paul did not invent a Marian truth. The reality of Mary’s ecclesial maternity is as ancient as the Church, and the title itself has been used by Catholics for almost a thousand years 18. Pope Paul simply «certified» the growing understanding of the reality. He declared it certain.

No accident was it that the proclamation of Mary to be the Mother of the Church helped to overcome the mariological dichotomy. Papa Paolo acted consciously for this end. Nine weeks after the proclamation, in an address delivered on the Feast of the
Purification of Our Lady, the Pope alludes to what he hopes will be one fruit of the proclamation. He mentions the two «orientations that the Council intended to give to our Marian doctrine and devotion», the «Christocentric and the ecclesiological»; and he prays that the Mother of unity, Mater unitatis, will bring unity to the Church and especially to the then forthcoming Mariological Congress at Santo Domingo. Expressing his desire for mariology, the Pope says:

We think that this post-conciliar Congress, and along with it devotion to Mary throughout the world, will turn toward a deepening of understanding and love for the mysteries of Mary, rather than toward a dialectical effort at theological speculations that are still questionable and are more likely to divide individuals than to unite them.

We will see in section IV below that Pope Paul draws his theological justifications for the title from both schools of Marian thought.

One might argue that the Pope’s will has not come to pass, that there are still divisions in Marian theology and in Marian devotion. But what seems irrefutable is that intention on the part of Paul VI. Divergence in teaching and in belief there is and there will be, so long as humans are free and so long as Satan still has some influence over the human element of the Church. However, the good will and the wisdom of the Holy Father have borne fruit. Mariology today has its honest «maximalists» and «minimlists», but it is certainly not divided into two camps of intrasigent dialecticians.

«Roma locuta; causa finita», reads the old aphorism. A triumphalistic hierarchophile might rejoice that Pope Paul silenced the opponents of ecclesial maternity with his formal proclamation, but he wanted anything but to silence the great minds of the Church. «Roma locuta; causa finita» expresses some truth, but usually we understand it in a way that makes a caricature of papal teaching. «Rome has spoken; case closed» mocks the true purpose and nature of papal magisterium. Without questioning the charism of veracity that the successors of Peter have, the old aphorism would
be well balanced with a new one: «Roma locuta; causa incepta»-Rome has spoken; let the proceedings begin.

In a sense, the case of the ecclesial maternity is closed on November 21; one cannot now deny that Mary is Mother of the Church. But equally true is it that the case is now open as never before. Now all mariologists, of all the various schools, can together stand on the rock of a formal papal declaration made within the context of an ecumenical council, and they can plumb the depths of the declared truth. The debate is finita as far as whether Mary is the Mother of the Church or not, but it is incepta regarding the theological content of that maternity. The Pope gave us a skeletal truth, it is up to the Church to develop that doctrine legitimately and faithfully. It is up to the magisterium and the mariologists of today and tomorrow to determine what «Mother of the Church» means.

Pope Paul did not «side» with one contingent in the mariological debate. However, he did canonize a Marian truth that was defended by only one of the camps. If Mary is the Mother of the Church, then a purely parallel relationship between her and the Church cannot be taught. Implicit, therefore, in the proclamation is a disapprobation of some positions within the Ecclesiotypical camp. Mary is more than the model of the Church, more than a type, more than an individual New Eve corresponding to the collective New Eve which is the Church. Mary has some superiority over the Church; she has causal superiority. Not only is she chronologically first, but she is causally first!

In a Church which does not enjoy the surety of divine authority in her teachings, the papal proclamation would have been a source of more division. Those who disagreed with the timing or the substance of the proclamation would have divided the Church with a claim that their position was the correct one, but in Catholic Christianity we reverence the Church because she is Christ present on earth. We have reverence for her holiness which reflects that of Christ, and we reverence her veracity, which also reflects the veracity of Christ, the Word and the Truth. Therefore, when the Vicar of Christ (the mouthpiece of Him who is Truth) speaks, we listen and assent, religiously. After all, when Christ spoke in Galilee and Judea, «He taught
with authority and not like the scribes"\(^{23}\), and so it is with his vicars. When they speak on faith and morals, they speak from the Rock who is Christ.

This does not mean to say that we believe blindly. For from within our assent to the truth as it is revealed by Christ's human instruments, we use our divine endowments of intelligence and curiosity to explore the meaning of God's teachings. We do theology from the faith: \textit{fides quaerens intellectum}\(^{24}\), as St. Anselm taught.

Leaving aside the immediate reaction, then, of some Council Fathers and theologians, the effect of the papal proclamation was to unite the Church. All the Church can now, with no fear of exaggeration, turn to Our Lady as Mother. And the entire Church, as an enormous but intimate family, can now turn with confidence to her to plead for unity. She who as the proposed «Mother of the Church» before November 21, 1964, was, in a sense, a source of contention and division in the Church, is after that date the source of greater unity than ever. The Church as the mystical Spouse of Christ is now clearly Mary’s daughter. As the mystical Body of Christ, the Church united with her Head is inseparable from its Mother. With new clarity, then and surety, through this papal intercession, \textit{we have found our Mother!}

The ecclesiology of the Council taught us of the Church as a communion. Mary as Mother of the Church insures with maternal solicitude the unity of that communion. And now that we recognize her as the Mother of the \textit{Communio}, our prayerful and active cooperation with her is all the more effective. Knowledge bears power, and knowing that Mary is \textit{Mater Ecclesiae} means to be able to work with her as such, powerfully, for the unity and growth of her child.

\textit{Surpassing the Council}

The Pope did not surrender to false irenicism. Neither was his action a mere concession to some of the Council Fathers who were disgruntled\(^{25}\). To resolve the mariological debate, he had to step into the middle of the controversy. In doing so, he not only surpassed the theological debate, he also went beyond the Council.
Which is not to claim that Pope Paul contradicted the Council. Far from it, the Pope's proclamation sprang precisely from his experience of the Council. René Laurentin, member of the Theological Commission of the Council and a mariologist especially conversant in the thought of Giovanni Battista (even before he was elected Pope), writes that, «The proclamation of the title, 'Mother of the Church' does not spring from a long-time personal fervor of Paul VI. Barring any information to the contrary, the importance that he attached to the title Mater Ecclesiae arises from his reflection on the Council» 26. Through this teaching, Papa Paolo was able to «realize the integration of Mary into the Church without minimizing or reducing her to the rest of the rest of the Church» 27. The teaching comes from his lucid perception of a difficult period of transition in mariology which had become polarized after the apex of the Marian Movement 28. As Laurentin puts it, the definition of the ecclesial maternity springs from, «the intensity of a contemplative vision... from Montini, architect of the Council, as a way of reconciling two trends, or better yet, a way of making them converge» 29. In other words, the Universal Pastor acted from pastoral motive in this teaching.

For pastoral reasons, the Pope had to make clear what the Council had chosen not to. Regarding the ecclesial maternity, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council had purposefully taken a position open to varying interpretations. In Lumen Gentium paragraph fifty-three, the Fathers' compromise composition maintains that the Church honors Mary «as a most beloved mother» 30. Mater Ecclesiae is implicit here, but one could also exegete the phrase metaphorically. One could explain, for example, that, «Just as a child honors his mother, so the Church honors Mary, with that kind of affection and piety, just as if Mary were really the mother of the Church»! It is evident that the Council does not affirm categorically that Mary is the Mother of the Church. Pope Paul VI does.

The Fathers' non-committal position here reflects their formal agreement not to «decide those questions which have not yet been fully illuminated by the work of theologians» 31. Perhaps the democratic mechanics of the Council dictated that the Marian debate could not be resolved there. The Fathers did not want to
promulgate documents which were not approved with great unanimity. They did not want to teach authoritatively what large proportions of their number had not approved.

Pope Paul had no such worry; he acted with perfect unanimity, the unanimity of one. With reason the Council calls the Pope the foundation of unity in the Church. The Vicar of Christ is the still point in the dance of the Church; he is the point where theological wisdom is indivisible.

Furthermore, the Pope acted consciously with the intention of bringing unity to the Church, especially to her theologians and bishops. In the conciliar speech in which he proclaimed Mary to be Mother of the Church, the Pope called the title a «crown» set on the Marian teaching of the Council. The Latin is «fastigium» which is literally a height, a summit or a roof; it is translated in the Italian and Spanish versions of the speech as a «seal» placed on Lumen Gentium and in the French as a «roof.»

The message is clear: Pope Paul saw his words as binding together the Marian teachings of the Council and as adding something to them. In his apostolic exhortation on the Mother of the Church, the Pope recalls the standing ovation during the proclamation of Mater Ecclesiae and draws an optimistic parallel with the Council of Ephesus. Pope Paul writes:

We know this proclamation was a cause for much rejoicing among very many of the Council Fathers and the faithful present in St. Peter’s and among Christians throughout the world. It reminded many of that first triumphant celebration accorded to the humble ‘handmaid of the Lord’ (Lk 1: 38) when the bishops of the East and West, assembled at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, hailed Mary as Theotokos.

Before Ephesus there was division regarding whether Mary was the Mother of God and there was division regarding the nature of the divine and human unity in the Person of Jesus. The proclamation of Theotokos resolved the issue and brought peace to the college of bishops and to the Church. Pope Paul hoped for a similar unification after his proclamation of Mater Ecclesiae.
Of course, the decisiveness and clarity of his single voice necessarily contradicted some of those voices that preceded him. But the Pope needed to act decisively to set theology free! He had to set mariology free, not only for the sake of progress in the authentic understanding of Mary among the scholars, but also so that the mariology of the Second Vatican Council could be liberated from the academic squabble that had tainted it.

*Mater Ecclesiae* accomplished, as José Aldama says, a synthesis of conciliar mariology, a synthesis which the Council itself had not been able to formulate. The Holy Father himself says clearly that his proclamation is not a mere rewording of conciliar teaching. It is certainly «conciliar» in the sense that it is in line with the Council. The Pope assures us that the title «expresses the lofty place in the Church which this Council has acknowledged as proper to the Mother of God». But he emphasizes that the declaration is not merely a repetition of the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium*. «After due promulgation of the Constitution on the Church», explains the Vicar of Christ to the bishops surrounding him, «We have set a kind of crown [on *Lumen Gentium*] by declaring Mary to be Mother of all the faithful and of the bishops, that is, of the Church».

The papal proclamation is precisely an authoritative magisterial *interpretation* of the Council's teaching. Padre Juan Ordóñez Márquez explains this lucidly: The proclamation has liberated the Conciliar thought on Mary, «from the risk of a minimalistic reductionism: ...the reductionism of the ecclesial maternity of Mary to mere spiritual maternity.» Ordóñez continues:

It [the proclamation] has situated it [the conciliar teaching] in the dynamic maximalistic line of a maternity that influences the totality of the mystery of the Church as such and all the dimensions in which the entire Church presents herself in the Council: in her structures; in her profound mystic complexity of People of God and Mystical Body of Christ; in her visible and invisible elements, common and differentiated; in her vocation, eschatological dimension and evangelizing and sanctifying mission...
[Mary’s maternity] is not only the basis of an interecclesial «veneration as a most beloved Mother» (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 53), but is the foundation of an «ecclesial Marian dependence» in all of the mysterious relationships—vital, constitutive, symbolic or sacramental, receptive or testimonial (and also charismatic?)—of the Mystical Body with Christ its Head

We see now that the reason «why» for the proclamation cannot be that Pope Paul simply wanted to manifest his papal authority, nor simply was it a desire to express his devotion publicly to Our Lady, nor was he acting simply to please the Polish representation present which had requested the proclamation. He may well have considered all these elements, but we believe he willed especially to interpret authoritatively the conciliar teaching on Mary in order to foster unity in the Church and ensure the right understanding of Mary’s role in salvation.

Pope Paul had not surpassed the Council in the sense of touching new doctrinal themes, but he had surpassed it in clarity. He continued the very thought of the Council in the same direction in which the Fathers were headed. They saw Mary as central to redemption. Paul VI synthesized that for us and determined the vastness of her involvement in redemption by naming her «Mother of the Church.»

At the end of his discourse which closed the third session of the Council, the Pope descended amidst applause. The Fathers of the Council sang «Tu es Petrus». The «final word» had been pronounced.

On that November day, the Pope directed himself to the Church universal and each of its members regarding a matter of faith, and he taught from the vast treasure of divine truth. For the glory of God and the salvation of human beings, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, Pope Paul shed a little more light on the human condition, on our history, our end—all through his teaching about the nature of Mary.

During the second session of the Council, in 1963, a Spanish journalist heard two bishops talk as they left St. Peter’s after the heated discussions on Our Lady.
«We should build Our Lady a special house all of her own», said one bishop.

«I would prefer», replied the other, «that she have the main floor in the house where we all live» 42.

Both got their way. The Conciliar teaching on Mary placed her squarely in the Church and the world, she is a woman whose faith and love are exemplary for us. She is a solicitous mother watching over each of her individual children. She is «on the main floor in each of our homes.»

The proclamation of Mary to be Mother of the Church complements that conciliar teaching by affirming decisively Mary’s causal role in the universal master-plan of salvation. She is not only «on the main floor of each of our homes» as a loving sister and mother interceding for every individual Christian, but she also «inhabits a house uniquely her own», because her motherly mantel alone covers the entirety of the Church. She not only dwells in our home, but she is a cause of the existence and the perpetual guardian of our «home», the Church.

She is Mother of the Church.

III. A MOST DELIBERATE PHRASE

In the preceding pages we answered in part the «why» of the papal teaching; we turn now to the declaration itself and to later papal magisterium that explain authoritatively the «how» and the «what» of the proclamation. Our focus here will be on Paul VI’s theology, and in the conclusion we will turn briefly for corroboration to a pastoral letter by the bishops of the United States and to Pope John Paul II’s teaching.

Edward Schillebeeckx wrote that the proclamation by Pope Paul was «an act of southern piety without great theological or doctrinal scope» 43.

Nothing could be further from the truth. To undervalue either the theological or the doctrinal weight of the proclamation would be to misunderstand, not only Mary, but also her role in
salvation. Indeed, to fail to understand Our Lady’s role in redemption is to endanger our understanding of redemption itself.

Pope Paul’s proclamation was certainly an act of piety. In the proclamation speech itself he professes his devotion to Our Lady and expresses his hope that greater honor be given to her with the new title. But there is little doubt that the Pope’s piety was enlivened by theological motives. The proclamation was not a mere show of Mediterranean sentiment, and the reality of the ecclesial maternity did not come to the Pope in a spontaneous mental flash in November of 1964. We have seen that he taught this theological reality years before the Council as the Cardinal of Milan. Then he intervened both as an episcopal Father of the Council and as the Pontiff of the Council to promote the same.

Early in the second session, before the Fathers in St. Mary Major’s, the Holy Father directed a passionate prayer to Our Lady. He asked her to, «Move this Church, Mary, as it defines itself, to recognize you as its Mother». At the close of the second session Pope Paul implored the «unanimous and most devout recognition of the place that the Mother of God holds in the Holy Church» and insisted that with the name «Mater Ecclesiae» we could honor her for his [God’s] glory and our comfort.

The Pope was not alone in his promotion of this Marian and ecclesial relationship. Could he have been motivated by a desire to please the Council Fathers who had struggled in vain to include the doctrine in the conciliar teaching? Perhaps in part. In the proclamation itself he mentions that «many Fathers» had requested him to make the proclamation. In later magisterium he notes pointedly the support he had. But, again, this teaching had already been part of Giovanni Battista’s theology for years. He first learned of the title and of its history, apparently, from a work by one of his favorite theologians, Henri de Lubac, as early as 1953.

In the proclamation speech the Pope alludes to the conciliar struggle to define the episcopacy and its relation to the papacy: He tells the Fathers he is happy to have been able to give «force, meaning and fullness» to the conciliar doctrine just approved.
(an allusion to the fact that a council can only exercise universal authority with the consent of the Roman Pontiff\textsuperscript{53}). Was the teaching that Mary is Mother an attempt to seal with a demonstration the supremacy of the papacy? Was the Pope trying to teach that even in the face of episcopal opposition, papal teaching is authoritative? Certainly the Marian proclamation made that ecclesiological point (as we pointed out in the last chapter), but mostly by coincidence.

\textit{Mater Ecclesiae} is indeed an ecclesial, and not solely a Marian teaching. It is profoundly and broadly ecclesial; it reflects truths about the nature of the entirety of Christ’s redemptive work in the world. That volume by de Lubac from which the Pope learned of the title and its sporadic foundation in Tradition was not a mariological work but an ecclesiological one; it was de Lubac’s \textit{Méditation sur l’Église}. Canon Laurentin quotes a letter from Pasquale Macchi regarding the work (and he calls Macchi, «one of the best witnesses of the everyday life, first of the Archbishop, and then of the Pope»\textsuperscript{54}). Macchi says that the Pope had two copies of \textit{Méditation sur l’Église}, and «frequently I have seen Paul VI spend long hours in meditation with the volume by de Lubac, in the chapel on Sunday afternoons when he did not have any commitments»\textsuperscript{55}. Pope Paul himself cited the work many times in his papal magisterium, both regarding ecclesial and Marian themes\textsuperscript{56}.

The title «Mother of the Church» refers certainly to the Church as well as to Mary, and it embraces more than just the relationship of authority between Pope and bishops. The ecclesiology taught by the title is profound and springs from its content, not merely from the immediate historical context in which it was proclaimed.

Shortly after the proclamation, Papa Paolo affirms the doctrinal import of the title and its divine origin:

When [the Church] proclaims the existence of a common Mother in the person of Most Holy Mary, it does so \textit{in virtue of a doctrinal exigency and to fulfill the last will of its Divine Founder}\textsuperscript{57}. 


And just three sentences before the proclamation proper Pope Paul explains briefly why the ecclesial motherhood of Mary is so important to God and so important for us:

Knowledge of true Catholic doctrine on the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be an effective aid to proper understanding of the mystery of Christ and the Church.\(^{58}\)

The papal pronouncement is of incalculable theological value because understanding that Mary is Mother of the Church teaches us about redemption. Pope Paul risked damaging ecumenical efforts (in the short run) and risked offending bishops with this teaching for redemption's sake; in other words, the risk was taken to gain clarity regarding how we relate to Christ through the Church. When the Church «proclaims the existence of a common Mother in the person of Mary Most Holy», said Pope Paul, shortly after the proclamation, «she does so in virtue of a doctrinal exigency»\(^{59}\). Pope Paul leaves no room to disregard this Marian and ecclesial relationship as a mere expression of regional piety.

What is more, the ecclesial maternity is a main current in the entire body of Pope Paul's Marian teaching. The leitmotif of the entire papacy and the entire life of Giovanni Battista Montini was his dedication to the Church. He was «the Pope of the Church», as Pope John Paul II maintains\(^{60}\). Little wonder, then, that we see an ecclesial leitmotif even in his mariology. Domenico Bertetto, perhaps the best qualified mariologist to make the claim, after compiling his anthology of Marian texts by Pope Paul, wrote that, «The Pope scarcely ever spoke of the Madonna without affirming that she is the Mother of the Church».\(^{61}\)

Many have seen the apex of Pope Paul's Marian teaching in his Marialis cultus, but this apostolic exhortation on the liturgical veneration of Mary is only one manifestation of a much more basic theme. That Mary should be given a central place in the official worship of the Church presupposes that she is central to redemption. It presupposes that she has a singular maternal munus: she is Mother of Christ and Mother of his Church. In Paul VI's «ecclesiological mariology», he also exalts Mary as a type of the Church. But even that, we shall see, depends on the ecclesial maternity.
IV. THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

On May 13, 1967, Pope Paul released a Marian document that, from its very title, promises to shed light on the meaning of the title «Mater Ecclesiae.» The apostolic exhortation is known by the first two words in the original Latin text, Signum magnum, but the following descriptive title links the document more clearly to our subject. The document is «On Venerating and Imitating the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Model of All Virtues.» In this exhortation, the Pope lays out clearly how it can be that Mary is the Mother of the Church:

1. Because she is the Mother of Christ the Head.
2. Because she is associated with Him in redemption.
3. Because she is a model of virtue before the entire community of the faithful.\(^62\)

We will treat these theological explanations for the ecclesial maternity in this same order in which they appear in Signum magnum because this descending order is the order of their importance.

_Mater Ecclesiae because She is Mater Dei_

Pope Paul’s main theological justification for the proclamation of Mary’s ecclesial maternity is her divine maternity. Mary is Mother of the Body of Christ because she is the Mother of the Head. As the Pope explained to the Council Fathers:

The divine maternity is the source of those relationships that exist between Mary and the Church [in this case, her motherhood over the Church]; since Mary is the Mother of Christ, who, as soon as He took on human nature in her virginal womb, united to himself as its Head his Mystical Body which is the Church. And so Mary, as the Mother of Christ, must be regarded as the Mother of all the faithful and of the bishops which means of the Church.\(^63\)
Not long after the closing of the Council’s third session, the Pope repeated the same theological justification for the proclamation. In his radio message to the Church’s foremost Marian scholars united in the Dominican Republic, the Pope congratulated them for fulfilling his wish that Our Lady be studied and venerated specifically as the Mother of the Church, and he explained how Mary is the Mother of the Church. He affirmed that:

In the plan of the history of salvation, the Christian comes already here on earth to form part of the people of God and begins to be a member of the divine family. In this economy of salvation, Mary...gave birth to Jesus Christ who God the Father constituted, in a flourish of infinite goodness, the Firstborn among many brothers, that is, the older brother of the men in whose regeneration and supernatural education she cooperates with maternal solicitude. She is therefore «true Mother of the members of Christ» for having contributed with her charity to the birth in the Church of those faithful who are members of Christ their Head.

The Pope finds support for his theology in the wisdom of St. Augustine and again in his favorite modern ecclesiologist. On the tenth anniversary of the closing of Vatican Two, he reminds Catholics of the, «unquestionable right of the Blessed Virgin to the title of «Mother of the Church», and his explanation why includes a citation of precedents for his claim:

If, in fact, Mary is the mother of Christ in the flesh, and Christ is the head of the Church, his Mystical Body, Mary is spiritually the Mother of this Body, to which she herself belongs, at an eminent level, as daughter and sister (cf. St. Augustine, de Sancta Virginitate, V and VI; P. L. 40, 339; and cf. H. de Lubac, Méd. sur l’Église, c. IX).

Finally, even in Marialis cultus we find this christocentric theological justification for the Mary-Church relationship. Papa
Paolo, in the context of new themes in the liturgy, writes that the Church in her liturgy professes that:

In the mystery of Mary’s motherhood... she is the Mother of the Head and of the members—the holy Mother of God and therefore the provident Mother of the Church.

The universal, catholic and most solemn prayer of the Church, the prayer of the sacrifice of the Mass, in its recently renewed format and as it was approved by Pope Paul himself, confirms the same line of thinking. Mary is Mother of the Church because she is Mother of Christ who is inseparable from the Church. The votive Mass of «Mary, Image and Mother of the Church», has a proper preface with which the Church professes the following about Mary, Christ and the Church:

She received your Word in the purity of her heart, and, conceiving in her virginal womb, gave birth to our Savior and so nurtured the Church at its very beginning.

Thus prays the Church; thus believes the Church; and thus believes Pope Paul. Mary was only granted one maternity by God, but it is that single maternity that gives rise to the Savior and the saved. Mary only gave birth once! She only conceived once with her willed and conscious fiat, but that fiat gave rise to a double movement, a descent and an ascent: God became man, and man became God. Not only did God stoop to earth, but human nature was also raised from the dust. The meeting happens inside of Mary, physically and spiritually, and also through her, thanks to her.

One word summarizes the meeting between the God who descends and the humanity which He elevates: communio. Vertical communion, broken by Adam through Eve is restored by the New Adam through the New Eve. The new communion restores and creates horizontal communion as well, for when the subjects of salvation are united to the Savior, we are not united by some exterior adhesion. We are not fastened to the outside of the body of the Savior and thus carried to heaven with Him; on the con-
trary, we are filled from within with the Holy Spirit of the Savior and are made an integral part of his Body. All as one, united in horizontal communion by way of the vertical communion with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, we form a single Body, the Body of Christ. When Our Lady gave birth to Christ the Head, she gave birth to that Body! As the Spanish Jesuit, Antonio Aldama, wrote to push for a conciliar proclamation of the ecclesial maternity after Paul VI had exhorted the Fathers to teach the doctrine:

It is a question of the sole maternity of Mary that gives origin to the Head and the members, united intimately in one single Mystical Body, that is the Church. Mary is corporally the Mother of Jesus; but of the Jesus that was already the Head of the Mystical Body, indissolubly united to the members of his Body. Mary is Mother of the Church.

Logic indicates that the ecclesial maternity be based on the divine maternity. Writes Marcelino Llamera, «Mary, and all of Marian reality, has a sole and universal cause and reason, that is her divine maternity of Christ, humanized God, the savior of men. This was her predestination and is her history and her mission. Mary, as Mother, is completely relative and is in everything conditioned by her Son».

If Mary is really Mother of the Church and not metaphorically so, if she really had a hand in the birth of the Church, the very Church through which every human is saved—including herself—then her participation in its inception must obviously have been a pure gift from on high. And if the Church is the universal sacrament of the salvation worked by Christ, if the Church is nothing less than the hand of Christ in the world, then Mary’s unique relationship with the Church must come from her unique relationship with the One who is and moves the Church, with Christ.

That is precisely the case: Christ is the Son of Mary. Fully. The «Whole Christ» is the Son of Mary. Christ the hypostatic union between man and God born physically in Bethlehem was and is the Son of Mary. Christ present in the twentieth century world through his Mystical Body is also the Son of Mary. As Saint Luis de Montfort well said:
If Jesus Christ, the Head of men, is born in her, then the predestinate, who are the members of that Head, ought also to be born in her, by a necessary consequence. One and the same mother does not bring forth into the world the head without the members, or the members without the head; for this would be a monster of nature. So in like manner, in the order of grace, the head and the members are born of one and the same Mother; and if a member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ—that is to say, one of the predestinate—were born of any other mother than Mary, who has produced the Head, he would not be one of the predestinate, nor a member of Jesus Christ, but simply a monster in the order of grace.

In conceiving Christ who came to save, Mary conceived those whom He came to save.

Mary is not initially the Mother of Christ in himself and then the Mother of Christ as savior; she is not first the Mother of the second Person of the Trinity and then Mother of Him as He unites himself to humanity through the Incarnation. Such an understanding is not only an unwarranted abstraction of the historical reality of the Incarnation, but could also be formally heretical.

The understanding of the divine maternity that the Church owes to the Council of Ephesus intends to teach that Mary is «Mother of Christ who is God»

1. Mary is the God Bearer; her Son, in his Person, is divine, and she gave birth to that Person, not to his human nature. Natures are not born, persons are. However, the Virgin did not generate his divinity.

2. The person, therefore, to whom she gave birth was Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Mary is not the source of Jesus’ divinity; neither did she merely mother his humanity. She is the Mother of the Redeemer.
This highlights for us the greatness of God’s love and also the centrality of Mary in redemption. The Word stooped to be transformed for us. The second Person of the most holy Trinity, as soon as He became hypostatically united to humanity, is the savior of that humanity. He who by his divine nature is impassible suffered for us, and He who by his divine nature is unchanging became something new for us. He became our savior.

Christ = savior, and christology is soteriology. The study of the God-man is necessarily the study of redemption. Christ came, historically, to save us from three historical evils: sin, satan and death, but who Jesus Christ is is inseparably linked to why He came and what He does. Christ’s theandric being not only determines his salvific action, but is inseparable from that action.

Therefore, if Mary is the Mother of the God-man, she cannot remain on the margin of his redemption. She is Mater Redemptoris, the Mother of the Redeemer, as John Paul II writes. And to be mother of He who is intrinsically and exclusively the Redeemer means to be related to him as Redeemer. The only reason Jesus is Son of Mary is so that He can redeem; the only reason for his temporal existence is to give glory to the Father through redeeming. To put it simply: if Mary mothers the Redeemer, she mothers the redeemed: in mothering the source of Redemption, she mothers the object of Redemption.

We are not born physically of the Virgin, just as we are not biological members of the Body of Christ. But real members of Christ we are;—“Though many, we are one body in Christ”73. Similarly, Mary’s maternity is real, but beyond the poor reality that is visible to human eyes; it is mystical maternity. That mystical maternity occurs subjectively and individually to me when I first come into contact with Mary’s Son. When I am first raised to the Father through contact with the Son, then I participate in the fruits of redemption: I become a son of the Father in the Son, and I become a son of Mary in the Son. As Juan Ordoñez writes:

As the natural Paternity of the Father over the Word becomes an «extended Paternity» over the sons who are adopted by their incorporation into the incarnate Word (Gal. 4: 4-5), so Mary’s Maternity over the Head of the new and redeemed humanity becomes —beginning
already, radically, with the foundational event of the ontological Incarnation— an «extended maternity» over those connaturalized and called to «conform themselves» (Rm. 8: 29), with the First-born of many brothers.

There is no Marian spiritual maternity without divine spiritual paternity. Neither is there spiritual maternity apart from the Church. Mary is never exclusively my Mother. Without question she is intimately and personally my Mother in response to a deeply experienced human need for one-to-one, loving colloquia, but we must not forget that our filial relationship is a communal one; being a son or daughter of Mary implies being a sibling to all of her other children. Mary’s spiritual maternity of individuals is possible precisely because it is not exclusive, precisely because it relates me both to Christ, her First-born, and to the rest of her children who form the Family of the Church. Mary is the Mother of «a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit» and the Mother of a people fused by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of numerical unity.

Why is Mary’s spiritual maternity necessarily communal? Because although we join Mary’s family when the Father calls us into existence and then the Son brings us to Christianity, that family preceded us. Mary did not conceive me as an individual through her fiat in Nazareth; she conceived Christ and his Body, the Church. I am born of Mary only when I am called into the Church, the Body of Christ; then, as a member of the Mystical Body conceived by her on a historical date two thousand years ago, that maternity comes to bear on me personally, and I enjoy the intercession, the education, and the love of a perfect Mother. Only then do I personally join the communion that has healed the world since the Incarnation. Only then does Mary, Mother of the Church, become my mother. As Father Jean Galot writes, Mary’s spiritual maternity of individuals is possible only through her ecclesial maternity: «If the spiritual maternity of Mary is an accepted truth in piety and in theology, it is inconceivable that one could restrict its extension to a series of individuals: her maternity could not exist with respect to individuals except that it exists with regard to the Church».
The Christotypical school of Marian study that existed before the Council and ended up less than victorious within the Council was vindicated, in a sense, by Pope Paul’s proclamation of *Mater Ecclesiae*. Not only was this camp confirmed in the exalted position that they gave to Our Lady, but we see now that the main justification used by the Pope is the very one held by them to be the basis for all mariology. As M. J. Nicolas wrote, «the divine maternity is the principle of mariology just as the hypostatic union is that of christology»79. However, the subtle theology of Pope Paul VI finds that, although the divine maternity is the first principle of ecclesial maternity, it is not the only principle. Mary is bound inseparably to Christ, but that bond is complemented by her role in the work of Christ and by her immediate relationship to those affected by that work. Let us turn now to her maternal association to Christ’s redemptive work.

*Mater Ecclesiae, because She is Christ’s Associate*

In Pope Paul’s theology, Mary is Mother of the Church because she is the Mother of Christ, but he also repeated another, more general, theological principle in order to explain *Mater Ecclesiae*: the principle of cooperative salvation. Saint Augustine phrased this reality in a way that has merited much repetition: «He who made you without you, will not save you without you.» In our celestial Father’s master plan of salvation, He has willed, mysteriously, to act always mediately. The one Mediator of our salvation is, of course, his Son; but the Son in turn dignifies the subjects of redemption beyond measure by letting them participate in their own redemption. Not only does Christ allow me to cooperate in my own salvation, He *requires* that I cooperate with grace. I am not saved by Christ alone, but by Christ and me!80.

Even more ennobling is the opportunity that Christ gives each of us to participate in the salvation of our fellow subjects of redemption. Each of us is given a small piece of salvation history in which to leave our own mark! Each of us is given a spiritual field of influence; each of us is surrounded on the physical, geographical plane and on the invisible, spiritual plane by a host of fellow humans that depend in part on us for their eternal
salvation. Christ is the only Savior, the only Redeemer, and yet He wills to use broken human instruments to help save their fellows.

The Father, however, is not egalitarian when he dispenses the responsibilities and gifts to those He chooses as assistants in the work of salvation. Some are destined in the history of the Church to affect many more souls than others. St. Anthony, for example, is without question one of the most loved of the saints; more churches are dedicated to him, more images of him revered and more prayers to him raised than seem to be merited by his life and work. Why this devotion? Undoubtedly because in the order of grace he is a giant among giants. Why all those prayers to St. Anthony? Because God wills to answer those prayers.

The Virgin Mary holds a vastly more central role than St. Anthony in the salvific plan of the Father. The greatest of saints may help bring legions of souls to Christ, but Our Lady helps bring ALL souls to Christ. As Pope Paul wrote in Marialis cultus regarding the annunciation: Mary, «taken into dialogue with God, gives her active and responsible consent, not to the solution of a passing problem, but to the ‘event of the ages’» 81. Our Lady, therefore, began to relate to all men with her «fiat», and her role in salvation was made consummately universal in the shadow of the cross. Mary’s «maternal role was extended and became universal on Calvary» 82.

This universality of Mary’s co-salvific work is expressed densely with the title, «Mother of the Church.» Jean Galot explains:

The quality of mother of the Church underlines the universalism of her intercession. We appeal to Mary to intercede for all the needs of the Church; she intercedes for each of her children for the benefit of the entire Church.

This universality marks the distinction between the intercession of Mary and that of other saints. The rest of the saints have only a limited mediating activity in consonance with their specific destiny and the kind of mission that they assumed through the course of their earthly lives. Mary intercedes in all domains; her intercession
is everywhere present, by reason of the universal breadth of her maternity. She is invoked for every kind of grace.

The Madonna is the archetype of participative salvation. Her loving, selfless «do unto me according to your word» not only enabled the Word to become incarnate, but it made possible the beginning of the accomplishment of the purpose of the Incarnation.

The Word Incarnate must not be separated from the reason for his Incarnation; by the same token, the Mother of the Savior cannot be separated from salvation; the Mother of Christ cannot be separated from the reason for her maternity. She is the Mother of the Word only because the Father sent Him as the Savior; therefore, her relationship with Him, as the Mother enabling Incarnation, gives her an immediately soteriological role.

Pope Paul understood this well. As he taught in a visit to Sardinia:

What is the question which absorbs, one can say, all religious thought, all theological study today, and which torments modern man, whether he knows it or not? It is the question of Christ—who He is, how He came among us, what His mission is, his teaching, his divine nature, his human nature, his insertion among mankind, his relationship with and importance for human destinies.

Christ dominates thought. He dominates history. He dominates the concept of man. He dominates the supreme question of human salvation. And how did Christ come among us? Did He come of Himself? Did he come without any relationship with or any cooperation on the part of mankind? Can He be known, understood and contemplated in abstraction from the real, historical and existential relationships which his appearance in the world necessarily implies? Clearly not.

The mystery of Christ is made part of a divine plan of human sharing...

It is, therefore, no negligible, secondary chance circumstance, but an essential part, one that is of the
greatest importance, beauty and comfort for us human beings, that Christ came to us through Mary. We must receive Him from her. We encounter Him as the flower of humanity, opening on the immaculate and virginal stem that is Mary.

Every Christian enjoys an active role in the «divine plan of human sharing.» We can all be tools in Christ’s hands for the edification of his kingdom, but our cooperation is with a work already well in hand. Mary’s cooperation makes possible ours. Just like the Virgin, we too can conceive and bear Christ through receptivity to the Holy Spirit, but we owe our spiritual conception to Mary’s physical and spiritual conception of Christ.

In his apostolic exhortation on the Mother of the Church, Pope Paul adjures us to venerate Mary because her efforts «contributed greatly—and still do— to man’s attainment of salvation. Thus all Christians may adopt the prayer of St. Ambrose: ‘May we deserve to ascend to Jesus, your Son, through you, Blessed Lady, as He deigned to come down to us through you’».

Our Lady’s initial contribution to the construction of the Church, with the event of the Incarnation, compares to the pouring of the foundation of a building. It was a necessary step in the edification of God’s house, and it enables us carpenters and roofers to do our important but less fundamental work. However, Mary’s part in salvation history did not simply take place once upon a time; she, like the foundation of any building, will always support the edifice (the Church). As the Pope said in Sardinia, «We must receive Him from her».

In perhaps the weightiest document ever written by him, Paul VI describes how Mary is Jesus’ permanent associate in the work of salvation. In the Creed that he composed for modern mankind he wrote:

The blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role with regard to Christ’s members, cooperating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed.
The Pope’s apostolic exhortation on the Mother of the Church, *Signum magnum*, contains even more graphic human imagery. «No human mother can limit her task solely to the procreation of new human beings; she must also undertake the task of nourishing them and educating them», writes the Pope; «so it is with the Blessed Virgin Mary... Now in heaven she carries on her motherly role, helping to nourish and foster divine life in the souls of redeemed men».

Of course, God is the only cause, absolutely speaking, of salvation. After Adam’s fall, man was irredeemably separated from God. But he makes use of creatures to aid creatures in an economy of *subordinate causality*. Pope Paul does not hesitate to use this technical language to make precise the living reality:

The theological truth... enters the frontiers of that subordinate causality, which in the divine plan of salvation inseparably associates the creature, Mary, the Handmaid of the «Fiat», with the mystery of the Incarnation, and makes her, St. Irenaeus writes, «a cause of this salvation for herself and for the whole of mankind» (*Adv. haereses*, III, 22, 4).

«Marian dogma» taught Pope Paul, shortly after the proclamation, contains «a symbolic summary of the Catholic doctrine in human cooperation in redemption».

But my role in salvation is only analogous to hers. The Pope asserts that, «To arrive at Jesus we must first greet Mary». And in an early encyclical on Our Lady, Pope Paul wrote that the Church has «recourse to that most ready intercessor, her Mother Mary», because, «as Saint Irenaeus says, she ‘has become the cause of salvation for the whole human race’». Nothing like that can be claimed of any other secondary cause.

«Due devotion to Our Lady is a sign of the correct interpretation of the Christian religion», because,

The divine plan of salvation for all mankind, for the whole of history... hinges... upon her human cooperation, there depended the fulfillment of the decisive and
ineffable fact, but nonetheless true and real, of the Incarnation... She is at the center and at the apex of the fortunes of mankind... She is the Mother of the Body of Christ in the flesh, and she is the Mother, through human and spiritual solidarity, of the mystical Body of Christ which we constitute, the Church.

If we of the present day yearn to grasp the economy of salvation, if we labor, perhaps unwittingly, for unity, brotherhood, peace, for the salvation of the human race, we cannot but acknowledge the position and mission of Mary 94.

Sacred Scripture reveals how redemption takes place, really. If we had no revelation on how an utterly transcendent, infinite and all-powerful God accomplishes reconciliation with mankind, we would certainly not presume to imagine that He might use human instruments to assist in the work of reconciliation, even on a limited, «local» level. Much less would we imagine that a single human could have a hand in universal salvation. Mary is a scandal for those who ignore the gospels. But the shock that the actions of this completely temporal and finite Middle Eastern woman could have timeless and universal consequences becomes a reassurance of the power and benevolence of God if we understand Mary as Pope Paul VI did. The Pope answered the objectors as follows:

Some people have sought to accuse the Catholic Church of having given excessive importance to Mary’s mission and to her cult, heedless of the irreverence thus inflicted on the Incarnation, and thereby of the rejection of this fundamental mystery from the economy of history and theology. The cult which the Church attributes to Mary does not prejudice the totality and exclusiveness of the worship that is due only to God, ...but rather guides us to it and guarantees us access to it, because this cult retreads the way trodden by Christ in descending to become man 95.

Mary can in no way be a soteriological force on her own. In her function as Christ’s «working partner», she is an intrinsical-
ly relational partner. The Handmaid is nothing in herself and everything in Christ. «Mary exercises her maternity over the Church in such a way that this participation is classed ‘mediation’ and ‘dispensation of graces,’” explains Father Juan Esquerda, but «all of that is nothing more than the way in which Christ comes to us directly, given that Mary forms a part of the mystery of Christ the Redeemer». She is the Mother of the Son, not of her own choosing, but because the Father so desired, and now she simply continues her relationship with her Son who is the Redeemer. And that maternal relationship extends beyond the individual hypostasis of her Son to the Communio of his Body, the Church. As Mother of the Redeemer she is co-redeemer of the objects of redemption; as Mother of the Redeemer she is Mother of the Church.

Mater Ecclesiae because She is Its Type

Mary is the Mother of the Church—not only because she is the mother of Jesus Christ and his closest associate in «the new economy... when the Son of God takes on human nature from her in order to free men from sin by the mysteries of His flesh;» but also because she «shines as the model of virtues for the whole community of the elect». In a homily in December of 1975, Pope Paul asked himself a rhetorical question regarding Mary’s relationship to the Church: «A model, a specimen, an ideal figure of the Church; is that enough?» He answered himself negatively: «The theological truth goes further and enters the frontiers of... subordinate causality.» The Pope said the same thing in the speech in which he first proclaimed Mary Mother of the Church; in both cases he safeguarded the Church’s teaching on Mary (and therefore our understanding of redemption) from the dangerous limitations of the Ecclesiotypical school of mariology.

However, to say that Mary’s relationship to the Church as its type is not an all-encompassing truth, is not to deny that she is its type. The Pope does precisely the opposite. That Mary is
the archetype of the Church is a constant theme in the teachings of Paul VI. Hardly could it be otherwise, since this is one of the most ancient and widely disseminated of all of the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and the saints regarding the Madonna. Pope Paul repeats time and again that Mary is the model for the Church to follow, and that she has gone ahead of the Church on the same path of salvation that the Church now follows.

Our Lady is not a type of the Church in the sense of the word often used by biblical scholars. The prophets in the Old Testament, for example, are often called «types» of Jesus, or the manna in the desert is called a «type» of the Eucharist. In this sense of the word, a type is a shadowy symbolic representation that points to a greater element of salvation yet to come. Mary is a type in just the opposite sense of the word. If she is a symbol of the Church she must be a sacramental symbol, an effective symbol in which the reality conveyed is really present in the symbol. Mary is a sacrament of the Church because in her we do not only see represented, in microcosm, what the Church is, but she really is that reality.

«There exists a moment in the History of Salvation», writes Juan Ordóñez, «in which all of existent and demonstrable ecclesial reality is reduced to the intrahuman fact of Mary’s gestation of the humanized Word» 100. The Church of communion, the Church, which by its nature is a communion, is and comes from that primordial communion between God and Mary, between the God-Man and Woman. In Mary «the Mystical Body is not yet complete; it has to grow in magnitude; but qualitatively it is already perfect» 101.

In one sense, Our Lady can truly be said to be more Church than the Church! The life in communion with the Trinity that she lived perfectly on earth and now lives integrally in heaven is the life that the Church as a whole imitates. The Church in all her members strives for the day when she will live perfect communion with God and so enjoy the «assumption» which Our Lady has already been granted. The Church lives for that day «when, finally, all has been subjected to the Son, ...so that God may be all in all» 102. But Mary has lived, already, only to do the will of the Father in the truth of the Son and the love of the Holy
Spirit. Since the very day of her conception she has lived that human-Trinitarian communion perfectly.

Pope Paul in *Marialis cultus* is profound and clear; he reminds us that in the liturgy itself we «recognize in the Virgin’s Immaculate Conception the beginning of the Church» \(^{103}\). Mary «is mother, spouse and virgin before the Church and for the Church», writes Charles Jornet; «if the Church is mother, spouse and virgin it is principally in Mary and because of her... Mary is like the first wave of the Church that engenders those that follow» \(^{104}\).

Pope Paul’s description of Mary as ecclesial model is beautiful and creative in itself. In a General Audience, for example, the Pope continued a theme particularly dear to him, that of Mary as the *via pulchritudinis*. Mary is the «way of beauty» to heaven, and with regard to her nature as type, the Pope says:

> We must know the Madonna better as the authentic and ideal model of redeemed humanity. Let us study this limpid creature, this Eve without sin, this daughter of God, in whose innocent, stupendous perfection, the creative, original, intact thought of God is mirrored. Mary is human beauty, not only aesthetic, but essential, ontological, in synthesis with divine Love...

> Our Lady is the sublime «type» not only of the creature redeemed by Christ’s merits, but also the «type» of humanity on its pilgrim way in faith. She is the figure of the Church, as St. Anselm calls her (*In Lc. II, 7; P. L. 15, 1555*), and St. Augustine presents her to Catechumens: «figuram in se sanctae Ecclesiae demonstrat» (*De symb. 1; P. L. 40, 661*) \(^{105}\).

The Virgin Mary is «a divine dream, a masterpiece of human beauty, not sought in the formal model only, but realized in the intrinsic and incomparable capacity of expressing the Spirit in the flesh, the divine likeness in the human countenance, invisible Beauty in the physical figure», and in «that faultless model» the Church «joyfully contemplates... that which she herself wholly desires and hopes to be» \(^{106}\).
When Pope Paul maintains that Mary is the model or the type of the Church, he is asserting that the Church should follow the example of a humble Nazarene, and it should do so, not only for practical moral reasons, but for ontological ones: the Virgin is what the Church will be. According to this theology, the Church is intrinsically Marian. Mary is the «divine dream» which God wills to become universal reality; she is the «intact thought of God» which He proposes as the norm or standard for his shattered thought, that is, for the rest of humanity, broken by sin. The Church will one day be immaculate and beautiful beyond words—just as beautiful as Mary is now.

This theology of Mary as the via pulchritudinis is creative indeed. Yet more creative is how Pope Paul relates Mary, the type of the Church, to Mary, the Mother of the Church. He teaches, starting with the very speech in which he proclaimed Mater Ecclesiae, that, in part, Mary’s ecclesial maternity is explained by her nature as type. He does not assert that she is Mother of the Church, causally, because she is its model. She is only Mother of the Church, causally, because of her relationship with the Trinity. She is the instrumental cause of the Church through the conception of the Head of the Church (the Son), by the Father, through the overshadowing of the Spirit. However, one way in which she truly mothers the Church is by being the prototypical model of the Church.

Why, in other words, is Mary the Mother of the Church? Because God chose her and she accepted the divine maternity and its redemptive and social implications.

How is Mary the Mother of the Church? First, through her unique relationship with the Trinity, second, through her continuing intercession, and third, through her pedagogical expression of what the Church should be. Mary expresses—she teaches, in her very being—what the Church should be.

This third element rounds out her motherly nature. After all, motherhood entails more than mere causality. A mother does not conceive a child to abandon him. After her initial «causal» part is played in conception and gestation, a Mother’s work has only begun. We have seen how Mary’s case is like that of any mother. She defends, nourishes, encourages and teaches her children ceaselessly. She also continues the post-natal formation of
her children through her example. The Pope now turns our attention to the moral, intellectual, emotional and social formation accomplished by Mary as type and exemplar of the Church.

On November 21, 1964, immediately after the formal proclamation and after answering the «why» of Mater Ecclesiae, the Pope explained to the Council Fathers the exemplary «how»:

In this mortal life, she showed herself the perfect image of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. She was the mirror of all virtues, and she took the beatitudes that were preached by Christ Jesus and reproduced them to the full in her own life. As a result, the universal Church, in developing the many sides of its life and activity, finds the definitive model for perfect imitation of Christ in the Virgin Mother of God.

Pope Paul's apostolic exhortation on the ecclesial maternity develops this teaching. He writes in Signum magnum that Mary's assistance to the Church is not restricted to her intercessory role; «she also benefits the Church in another way—by her example. The power of her example is of no small consequence. As the old saying goes: 'Words push, example pulls'.

Mary is most edifying for us in the exemplary relationship she lives with the Trinity, in her docility to the promptings of the Father, in her radiation of the Spirit and his gifts and in her complete unity with her Son in his joys, his sorrows and his ultimate triumphs. The Virgin is exemplary in her exclusively relational existence. She does not live for herself, but for God. She lives for communio with the Trinity and to promote communion with God on the part of others: «We can say that the whole life of the Lord's humble handmade—from the moment the Angel hailed her to the moment she was borne, body and soul, into heaven—was one of loving service». Even saint Paul bids us to «be imitators of me». If this apostle has a right to direct us to imitate him, writes the Pope, much more so does Mary. For to imitate her perfectly would mean to imitate Christ perfectly.

The Madonna is perhaps needed more by contemporary humanity as a model than ever she has been needed. Her example counteracts some spiritual maladies especially acute in our day. As
Pope Paul wrote in *Marialis cultus*, the image of Mary reassures modern man, for:

She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death.

At the Synod of Bishops called in 1969 by Pope Paul, he addressed a homily to the Synod Fathers on Mary, the Mother of the Church. In that homily he emphasized one virtue of Mary most needed by the Church in the turbulent modern world: her faith. «The Church most needs one thing to be in communion with Christ, with God and with man. That one thing is faith, supernatural faith... You, Mary, are blessed because you believed (Lk. 1: 45). Comfort us with your example, and obtain this charism for us».

The Pope repeats often in his Marian magisterium the teaching of St. Augustine that it was through faith that Mary conceived Christ. Saint Augustine taught that Mary conceived Christ first in her mind before conceiving Him in her womb.

This provokes profound thought on why the Church should imitate Mary. The Church, too, just like the Virgin, is called to give birth to Jesus in the world, not physically, but spiritually, just as Mary did initially. The Holy Spirit overshadows the virginal Church, just as He did the virginal Mary, and He fecundates her to conceive Christ. This is possible to the extent that we members of the Church imitate the virtues and especially the faith, of Our Lady who is «the image and the beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come». It is possible to the extent that we echo with our *fiat* that prototypical *fiat* pronounced two thousand years ago.

V. MARY AND COMMUNIO

How, again, is Mary the mother of the universal Church? The Pope has answered: she is mother of the Head and therefore of the Body; she is the associate of the Redeemer; she is the type of the Church.
The next question to be asked is: what fruit does the Church reap from this daughter-mother relationship? Individual Christians and the Church composed of us individual Christians benefit manifoldly from our relationships with Our Lady. We are guided by the Seat of Wisdom, consoled by the Mother of Sorrows, made valiant by the Queen of Martyrs, humbled by the Handmaid, raised by the Refuge of Sinners.

But the Church as such and Christians precisely as social animals are blessed in a special way through the divine gift of Mary’s ecclesial maternity: we are united by Mary, Mother of the Church. Mary is Mother of the Church catholic, the Church of every age and every area, of every epoch and locale. Therefore, no matter how disparate, no matter how distant, we are all united into a single family with a single Mother.

In the following pages we will document how Pope Paul understood that Mary’s motherhood unites us, and how Pope Paul’s proclamation ratifies the understanding of the Church promoted by the Council, the understanding that the Church is a communio. Pope Paul VI never used the term Mater Communionis which we have chosen for our title, but it is a small extrapolation indeed to connect his understanding of Mother Mary with his and the Council’s understanding of ecclesial communion.

Mater Ecclesiae and Lumen Gentium

Starting in the very proclamation address (an address, let us remember, which also served to recognize the conciliar document on the Church, which had just been formally approved), Pope Paul expresses his belief that «Knowledge of true Catholic doctrine on the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be an effective aid to proper understanding of the mystery of Christ and the Church» 115.

The Pope also expresses his belief that Mary binds the Church together with her ecclesial maternity 116. The Pope encouraged the bishops present in the Basilica of Saint Peter to «exalt the name and the honor of Mary all the more among the Christian people», that, «all the faithful, united by the name of the Mother they have in common, may thus feel ever more firmly rooted in the faith» 117.
With striking persistence in the proclamation speech, Pope Paul called Mary «Mother of the Church, that is, of the bishops and the faithful.» Three times in the address he made this specification. Certainly, he was not reminding forgetful bishops that they too belong to the Church. Was he not, on the contrary, recalling an element of the ecclesiology of communio just endorsed by the Council with the approbation of Lumen Gentium? Only paragraphs before the proclamation, the Pope had reaffirmed the «monarchical and hierarchical» character of the Church while noting that the communio in the Church is ensured by the happy cooperation between Pope and bishops. As Pope Paul expressed it, «When we acknowledge the full force and effectiveness of the episcopal office, We can see growth in the communion of faith, charity, work, and mutual aid all around us.» Was he not teaching that the Church is a many splended social body made up of varying, mutually complementary members, who are all united under the mantle of Mary? Was he not teaching that Mary is Mother of the whole Church in all of its organic integrity and not just the mother of the sum total of Catholics?

Papal addresses shortly after the proclamation lead us to believe this was indeed the case. Nine weeks afterward, in an address on the Feast of the Purification, Pope Paul made clear the connection between Mary, the Mother of the Church and the Church as she understands herself in the documents of Vatican Two (the Church as communio). First he says that the title «Mother of the Church» is «one that We recognize as due Mary Most Holy at this very moment of the maturing of the doctrine on the Church.» And in the same address, Pope Paul quotes one of his favorite contemporary theologians, thus making his own the thought of the scholar on this subject. The Pope says:

If devotion is, for the most part, directed toward the individual aspects of Mary's spiritual maternity, is it not perhaps desirable to have this view completed by its community aspect and to have the attention of the faithful called to this?

Here we see that «Mother of the Church» is more than a synonym for «Mother of Christians», and we see a glimmer of Mater Ecclesiae as Mater Communionis. Mary is certainly the
Mother of all individual Christians, but she is not just their mother \textit{qua} individuals. She does not relate to all of us «social animals» as if we were alienated beings. She does not relate to us as if we did not exist, by our very nature, in relationship with one another and with God.

On the contrary, Mary’s maternal care has, as the Pope says, a «community aspect.» We see here without doubt the most important reason for the proclamation, the reason why the Pope was willing to anger bishops who did not favor the title, the reason why he was willing to appear to be heavy handed by proclaiming a title that the Council had refused: the \textit{content} of the title. For the good of mankind and the salvation of souls, the Pope thought it invaluable to teach what the title contains, that is: Mary is Mother of men precisely (though not exclusively) as they are united in the organic structure of the Catholic Church.

Christians do not exist apart from the Church, and Mary always relates to them as they, in fact, exist. \textit{We are} the Church (together with Christ, in the Holy Spirit), and for Mary to relate to us, she must relate to the Church. She must, furthermore, necessarily relate to the Church \textit{as the Church is}. She must be the mother of the divine-human \textit{communio} which is modeled on the \textit{communio} of the Trinity, which was founded by Christ on the rock of a primitive hierarchy and which is locked together by the mutually complementary gifts of its wonderfully variegated members.

As a witness, for example, to the understanding that Pope Paul had of Mary’s maternity, not only of individuals, but even of the living structure of the Church, we recall the sermon he gave at the Synod of Bishops convened in 1969 to reflect on the Council. Within the context of a Marian sermon, Pope Paul recalled that the Church has «an essential trait of hierarchical communion» \textsuperscript{123}. He comments as well on how through the Second Vatican Council, «We have rediscovered the ecclesial communion which, on the apostolic level, we call collegiality» \textsuperscript{124}.

In the same address the Pope refers the Basilica of Saint Peter, where the bishops of the Synod are convened, as the «Bethlehem of Rome» \textsuperscript{125}. Mary was Mother in Bethlehem, in other words, of the Head of the Church and also, mysteriously, of the Body of faithful who were to be united to Him, but now
in the New Bethlehem of Saint Peter’s in Rome she continues to mother that Mystical Body, including the Pope who vicariously represents Christ the Head and including the other element of the central nervous system of the Church: the college of bishops. The Body of Christ seminal that Mary mothered in Bethlehem she now mothers actually around the globe.

*Marialis cultus* offers us another example of the connection in the Pope’s mind between the ecclesiology of the Council and Our Lady:

The faithful will be able to appreciate more easily Mary’s mission in the mystery of the Church and her preeminent place in the Communion of the Saints if attention is drawn to the Second Vatican Council’s references to the fundamental concept of the nature of the Church as the Family of God, the People of God, the Kingdom of God and the Mystical Body of Christ. This will also bring the faithful to a deeper realization of the brotherhood which unites all of them as the Virgin’s sons and daughters, in whose birth and formation she cooperates with a mother’s love.

The Church is a family engendered and reared by Mary. To rephrase what the Pope wrote, we might say that the nature of Mary’s salvific *munus* is revealed by the understanding of the Church that the Council has, that is, as *koinonia*. At the same time, to understand Mary well and relate to her according to her place in salvation history is to build the Church into an ever more perfect communion.

In fine, we concur with the Spanish mariologist, Juan Or-dóñez:

The act of magisterial teaching of Paul VI is not irrelevant for the interpretation of the conciliar mariology. [We add that the proclamation of *Mater Ecclesiae* also aids in the understanding of the ecclesiology of the Council.] It has explicitly liberated the conciliar mariology from the risk of a minimalistic reductionism:... the reduction of the ecclesial maternity to mere spiritual maternity over each of the individual faithful...
The proclamation has situated the conciliar mariology in the dynamic maximalist line of a maternity that acts upon the totality of the mystery of the Church as such and in each of the dimensions in which the entire Church makes itself present in the Council: in its structures; in the profound mysterious compound of People of God and Mystical Body of Christ; in its visible and invisible elements, common and differentiated; in its vocation; its eschatological dimension; and its evangelizing and sanctifying mission 127.

*Mater Communionis*

We quoted earlier in this chapter a sentence from Jean Galot which Pope Paul adopted as his own. Let us turn now to Galot’s reasoning surrounding the quotation, reasoning which must not be far from that of the Holy Father. In the sentence immediately preceding the one chosen by the Pope for his address, we read in Galot: «Regarding the spiritual maternity of Mary, a truth well known in both popular piety and in theology, it is incomprehensible that one could restrict its extension to a series of individuals: this maternity cannot exist with respect to individuals except that it exists regarding the Church» 128.

We read in the sentence from Galot’s article immediately following the one chosen by the Pope: «The Christian should not be indifferent to the fact that the Church herself, in her mission and in her growth, benefits from the maternal love of Mary. This love comes to bear on each individual Christian in particular and over the community as a whole» 129. When Pope Paul read this piece in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, must not he have understood the soteriological implications of calling Mary the «Mother of the Church?»

Galot’s article appeared shortly after the papal proclamation to explain it; a piece by José Aldama promoting the title before its proclamation helps us understand why Galot (and seemingly Pope Paul) so strongly asserted that Mary’s maternity of each of us depends on her maternity of all of us. Aldama uses St. John’s nineteenth chapter to teach what we will explain in detail in the
appendices following this chapter, namely, that we are saved in a social context. His conclusion is that Mary has a role in that social salvation. Father Aldama writes:

The vision of the Redeemer from the cross, although it is directed necessarily to each of the redeemed, sees them all within the new existence which His redemptive blood and death give to them; and this new existence rests necessarily within the new organism whose Head He is and whose members they are. What the Redeemer contemplates immediately from the cross is the Church which is at that moment coming into existence. Only through the Church, in unavoidable relation to the Church, does He see each man...

If, then, John represented the Church, Jesus’ telling him, «Ecce Mater tua», is equivalent to saying to the Church: «Behold your Mother» 130.

The American mariologist, Msgr. George Shea, understands, like Aldama and Galot, the radically social nature of Marian maternity and her cooperation in fostering ecclesial communion; but in all of our research, he is the only theologian we discovered who has drawn the connection between the anthropology of the Council and the Marian proclamation. He did so, briefly, in a presidential address which opened the annual meeting of the Mariological Society of America:

That Mary is the «Mother of the Church» is implicit in the general doctrine of the Second Vatican Council’s constitution «On the Church.» For, according to the second chapter of that constitution, God does not save men «merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather it pleased Him to bring men together as one people...» If we bring these teachings to bear on the avowals in Chapter VIII of Mary’s spiritual maternity, it follows that Our Lady’s maternity in the order of grace is not exercised first on individuals and then only by way of consequence on the Mystical Body... «It is exercised on the Mystical Body and members simultaneously, and on the members as integrating the Body» 131.
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Shea points here to the deep ecclesial significance of the title. Writing in the days immediately after the composition of Lumen Gentium and the proclamation of Mater Ecclesiae, the monsignor deduced this relationship between Mary and the Church which has remained unstudied and even ignored. His deduction from the events of 1964 confirms the induction of René Laurentin based on the latter’s extensive study of the thought and person of Pope Paul VI. Laurentin affirms:

The proclamation of the title «Mother of the Church» does not reflect a long-standing personal devotion of Paul VI. Barring the discovery of any information to the contrary, the importance that he attached to the title Mater Ecclesiae springs from his reflection on the Council, which revolved around the Church.

Mary’s ecclesial maternity indicates how intrinsically ecclesial each Christian is. If it is true that Mater Ecclesiae teaches that, «The spiritual maternity of Mary extends to and reaches all of the concrete faithful insofar as Mary is Mother of the whole Church» (as writes another Spanish Jesuit, Father Candido Pozo), then we learn from Mary how indivisibly united all of us children of God really are. From Our Lady’s maternal relationship with the whole Church, we understand how each Catholic must see himself as a being by nature related to Christ and his brothers and sisters in the mystical and structured communio of the Church.

Of course, if the ecclesial maternity fosters and teaches true koinonia, then horizontal, human communion is neither the only nor the first communion promoted. Horizontal communion in the Church depends on the vertical communion by the Father with the Word in the Spirit. In other words, if Mary effects fraternity in the Church, it is because (through God’s grace) she helps effect the unity of all Christians with God. The Mystical brotherhood of the saints springs from our brotherhood with Christ, our filiation under the Father and our bearing of the Holy Spirit.

The title Mater Ecclesiae does not imply an affirmation that Mary is the principle cause of the Church, as some of the Fathers of the Council feared. Pope Paul repudiated that misconception.
many times. For one example, in a homily in 1968, the Pope explains that Mary receives the title *Mater Ecclesiae*, «not in the sacramental order, as causes of grace, but in the order of the diffusing communion of charity and grace (proper to the Mystical Body)» 134. Neither does Mary’s ecclesial maternity imply that Mary is in all senses different from the rest of humanity. Pope Paul, for example, reconfirmed time and again that Mary is a member of the Church (albeit a singular member).

But the title does affirm that Mary had a God given role in the generation of the Church—all of the Church—, and that her maternal relationship to the whole Church, in all of its human and divine *communio*, continues even today. This relationship to the whole Church, as Pope Paul VI makes explicit in his teaching, puts Our Lady in a unique position to be able to work unity in the Church. In the proclamation speech itself the Pope calls her *Mater unitatis* 135. Elsewhere the Pope will assert that Mary’s power for cohesion is needed now more than ever.

*Mother for Modern Times*

Continuing with Pope Paul’s own explanation for the title, we hear him insist in a radio message that his teaching on «Mary as spiritual mother of the Church» is not «a purely speculative or abstract teaching, nor a program that has no application.» No, it is a teaching,

that is a message for every generation, for every epoch. And does not modern man live intensely and acutely preoccupied with himself?... Perhaps more than in times past, he seems to have become a prisoner of his own technology, a victim more than once of his very advances, alone and oppressed in so many cases by massifying urbanization, crushed on occasions by an impelling and devouring economic rhythm 136.

Mary needs to be understood as Mother of the Church especially in our age because we live in a time of individualism and alienation. We live *en masse* but not in communion. Although these problems are timeless, the Pope understands the
desperate need we have for a Mother in this age of unheard of mobility and instability, of divorced spouses and children with one parent, and of widespread disconnectedness from both secular and sacred tradition. He knows that:

The Church in this way [by heralding Mary as its Mother] situates the Christian in the atmosphere of a home, brings him near the warmth of a Mother, and invites him to live within a singular family.¹³⁷

What a message of relief and optimism for our times! We are all brothers and sisters, younger siblings of Jesus, in the family of the Virgin. In a world full of houses and housing complexes, but which lacks homes, Mary «situates the Christian in the atmosphere of a home» and invites him «to live within a single family.»

Our Lady promotes what every home needs most: family unity. «How good the Lord is», said Pope Paul in a 1967 radio message, «for placing the life of redeemed humanity under the sign of the maternal love of Mary! Love that unifies, that does not bear division, resentment or the sterile fighting of one’s own children».¹³⁸

Later in his papacy, during an angelus address the Pope will call on Mary in the midst «of the anti-social scene of delinquency that surrounds us», and will present her as a model of «personal and collective integrity of which our society has increasing need and at the same time a diminishing capacity of obtaining by itself»¹³⁹.

Cause of «Koinonia»

Papa Montini affirms that «In the plan of the history of salvation, the Christian comes, already here on earth, to form part of the People of God and begins to be a member of the divine family».¹⁴⁰ In other words, it is God’s will that we live divine-human koinonia, and the very koinonia internal to the Trinity comes to be the koinonia lived in the Church.
The Pope often links that *communio* to the co-redemptive work of Mary. She is not, of course, the mother of the Trinity, but she does mother us in the divine family to which we belong as members of the Church. To accept the ecclesial maternity of Mary is to affirm, not only that the Church is a mystery and not only that it has a divine origin and that it enjoys and manifests traces of the divine, but also that the Church is, by its very nature, *of God* and *in God*. Mary’s motherhood of the Church welds the Church to Christ. And, most amazing of all, the ecclesial maternity welds Christ to the Church! Let us recall Pope Paul’s primary explanation for how Mary is Mother of the Church: through the divine maternity. Christ and the Church are born of one maternity! As the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity are unmixed and yet undivided, so in the womb of Mary, Christ and the Church are unmixed and undivided. As Aldama writes:

It is a question of a single motherhood that gives origin to the Head and the members, intimately united in one Mystical Body that is the Church. Mary is corporally the Mother of Jesus, but of Jesus who was already Head and Mystical Body, indissolubly united to the members of his Body.

Mary’s relationship to Christ the Head of the Church, as his Mother, involves her in relationships in a manner unique in all human history. To be the mother of a president is not to be the mother of a nation; to be the mother of a pitcher is not to be the mother of a baseball team. But to be the Mother of Christ is to be the Mother of all Christians!

To be a president or a pitcher is, of course, to hold a relational position. A president, insofar as he is president, is intrinsically linked to his people and a pitcher to his team. The difference in Christianity lies both in the *munus* of Christ Jesus and in the nature of the Church. The second Person of the Trinity, as incarnate, is *essentially* our savior. He is *essentially, by nature and by mission*, Head of a Body. Christ, as incarnate, *only exists* as a Head, a Head *bound, at all times, to a Body*.

Christ does not depend on his Mystical Body for existence. He is Lord and Source of that Body, yet He chooses to be linked to us in his incarnate existence. He does not need the Church,
but chooses to be fastened to it. And while a baseball pitcher relates to his team on the level of actions, Christ relates to his Body on the level of his very incarnate being. He came solely to unite himself to us and to be our redeeming Head. A nation can limp along without a president, and a right fielder can fill in for a pitcher, but the Church has no being without its Head.

If it seems to be extravagant to claim that Mary is the Mother of the divine-human communio we call the Catholic Church, let us recall again that she is so precisely because she is the very Mother of the divine-human Person of Jesus Christ. As Pope Paul teaches:

In this economy of salvation, Mary, the Mother of the Incarnate Word, according to the will of God is also the spiritual Mother of all of humanity, she who has cried for all and suffered for all. She gave birth to Jesus Christ who God the Father constituted, in a flourish of infinite goodness, the firstborn of many brothers, that is, the older brother of the men with whose supernatural regeneration and education She cooperates with maternal solicitude. She is therefore «true Mother of the members of Christ for having contributed with her charity that there might be born in the Church those faithful who are members of the Head».

It is crucial for contemporary man to see Mary as the Mother of the Church, and for us to understand the Church as a family. It is crucial for contemporary Catholics to understand they belong, according to their nature and vocation as Catholics, to a communion of life in Jesus and Mary. It is crucial that we understand the Church as the most recent ecumenical council understands her, as a communio. That communio is united by the Holy Spirit from within and (in a cooperative, co-redemptive way) by Mary from without. Certainly the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of numerical unity in the Church; He is the one Person inhabiting all graced persons and thereby united them. But Mary is the Mother of numerical unity. At the Annunciation her fiat was pronounced on behalf of all of us. Mary’s human and specifically feminine act of receiving the Word into her heart and womb
caused (in a way subordinate to God and his power and will) the divine-human *communio* of the Church to commence.

With Jesus' Incarnation Mary also became the prototype for all Christians and even for the Church itself. Mary was, in the beginning, the only fully actualized member of the Church. She was the Church. We see here another view of how the Mother of Christ is the mother of unity in the Church. Not only is she an efficient cause of the unity in the Church through her intercession from heaven and through her initial *fiat* which bound us to her Son, but she is also an exemplary cause or even a formal cause (subordinate to God, of course) of that unity. Mary, the only person ever to be both Virgin and Mother, is the type of the one ecclesial Virgin and Mother. As St. Augustine wrote, she who has served as a mold for the Holy Spirit to cast the divine Head of the Mystical Body, serves Him as well as a die to form all the members of the Mystical Body, which is the Church.

At Cana the Madonna continued to help engender the Church; this time she was instrumental in the birth of faith in the Church. Her faith in Jesus and her understanding of Jesus’ redemptive mission bid those present (and all of us) to «do whatever He tells you».

At Calvary Mary accepted the divine will that she continue her motherly solicitude for the whole Church. She is more than «mom» to Jesus; she is universal mother, so He calls her «Woman» and gives her as Mother to «the disciple» who represents the Church.

God has chosen to exalt Mary in relation to the Church. Her maternity can truly be called «capital maternity». True, her influence in and over the Church is not parallel to Christ’s; it comes from Him, but nonetheless, it is a real and effective maternal influence that affects the entire sphere of influence of the soteriological capitality of Christ, her Redeemer Son. «In analogy and proportion to Christ, Mary is to the Church and to men through her spiritual maternity what Christ is to the Church and to men through his Capitality».

The Council affirmed that the Church venerates Mary «with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother». But we
have seen from our study of the Church as a communion and from the depth of the ecclesial maternity, that the Church does more than relate to Mary after the fashion of a child’s relation to his mother. The Church does not treat Mary «as if she were a mother» on the contrary, the ontological fact of the ecclesial maternity gives the Church her very existence and determines the nature of the Church and its relationship with God. That Our Lady is the Mother of the Church expresses a real dependency of the Church on Mary—especially with regard to the way the Church has related to Christ through Mary and in Mary. She is not simply a divinely appointed intermediary drawing men to Christ; she does draw men to Christ, but she does so in a way unique among the saints because Mary is the very point of encounter between Christ and Christians. She is not secondary and external in the Christian’s relationship to Christ but is the very means that the Father has chosen to relate to humans. As Ordóñez writes, all the mysterious relations between Christ and the Church, all the «vital, constitutive, signalogical or sacramental, receptive and testimonial» relations between the Mystical Body and Christ its Head, all of them we owe to Mary.\textsuperscript{151}

Veneration, therefore, of Mary as the Mother of the Church leads us to Christ—the whole Christ. Veneration of Mary leads to worship of Christ the Head, reverence for the Church and understanding of the radical unity we live in Him. It helps us to live the ancient admonition of Blessed Isaac of Stella:

\begin{quote}
Do not destroy the whole Christ by separating head from body, for Christ is not complete without the Church, nor is the Church complete without Christ. The whole and complete Christ is head and body.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

The evidence we have seen points to the conclusion that Pope Paul VI understood much of what we have explained regarding Mary, \textit{Mater Communionis}. We have made more explicit, without doubt, his thought regarding this specific aspect of mariology-ecclesiology-christology, but we hope our thought has been consistent with that of the Pope.
CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon to hear the comment regarding the title, Mater Ecclesiae, —even among experts in the theology of Mary— that, «we are not quite sure what it means.» In these pages we have uncovered the meaning of Mary's motherhood of the Church. Much has yet to be written on the subject; this is by no means the definitive study of the subject, but we can say with confidence that Mary's ecclesial maternity means or teaches the following:

1. That we are saved in solidarity; that salvation is an intrinsically social event and process.
2. That the Church is a mystical human unity indivisibly joined to a divine Person, Christ.
3. That Mary plays a role of subordinate causality in the salvation of all those united to Christ.
4. That her role stems from her relationship with Christ.
5. That her role continues today as active associate of Christ and prototype of the Church.
6. That although Mary is utterly dependent on God, the Church is dependent on her.

Corollaries which flow from the title:
1. We humans must see ourselves as intrinsically social beings.
2. The ecclesiology of koinonia of the Second Vatican Council is crowned and confirmed by the title.
3. We too can have roles of subordinate causality in the economy of salvation.
4. The being of Mary as Mother of the «whole» Christ, Head and Body, should fill the men of our age in particular with hope. We are not alone: A. We have one another. B. We have one heavenly Mother. We have one existence in Christ.

Fruits born of the title:
1. A reconciliation among the Ecclesiotypical and Christotypical scholars of Mary and her place in salvation.
2. A better understanding of the Church as an organic whole with members who are mutually complementary and mutually needy, that is, a better understanding of the Church as a family.

3. A further integration of Our Lady into the organic, singular plan of salvation.

4. And a consequent facilitation of a more balanced devotion to her.

The importance of the title, «Mother of the Church», seems difficult to deny. If one were tempted to think that the above claims are exaggerated or even that Pope Paul's appreciation for Mary's ecclesial maternity were an isolated anomaly, then a quick look at some magisterial corroboration authored by the bishops of the United States and by Pope John Paul II should put all doubts to rest.

On November 21, 1973, the ninth anniversary of Pope Paul's Marian and ecclesial proclamation, the bishops of the United States promulgated a pastoral letter on Our Lady. In this document, entitled Behold Your Mother, Woman of Faith, the American bishops affirm that:

The intercession of Mary extends not only to individuals but to the whole community of believers. She has a place in the ongoing work of redemption, which has as its goal, «to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship» (Eph. 1: 10).153.

The bishops understand now Mary's universal role in God's economy of salvation, and they understand that economy in terms of koinonia!

These quoted lines not only corroborate that Pope Paul understood that salvation is both a social and a Marian reality, but we also see here the fruit of Pope Paul's teaching: his stand to proclaim and defend the ecclesial maternity of Mary has made the teaching truly a part of the doctrinal patrimony of Christ's Church. Not only was Pope Paul convinced of the truth and the importance of Mater Ecclesiae but now an entire national conference of bishops (one that had been divided on the issue) has followed the Pope. As the American bishops add:
The full sense of Mary’s role [in salvation] is summed up in the title Pope Paul gave her, «Mother of the Church».

Many bishops were far from this consciousness during the Council. Mariologists before and during (and in many cases after) the Second Vatican Council were also far from this clarity. Cardinal Ratzinger’s evaluation of the events in and around the Council paints a clear but bleak picture of recent mariology. He writes that, «The victory of the ecclesiocentric mariology resulted in the collapse of mariology! . It is true; in the decades following the Council, there was a sharp decline in the amount of scholarship done on Mary, and Marian devotion declined correspondingly . Ratzinger explains why: «The new, ecclesiocentric mariology was unknown precisely by those Council Fathers that had been the representatives of Marian piety. A vacuum resulted» . We explained in sections II and IV how Pope Paul undertook to fill that vacuum with his teaching on Mary’s ecclesial maternity. He brought to an end the mariological crisis with the proclamation of Mater Ecclesiae.

Some Council Fathers were not happy with his proclamation, and so, initially, the breach may even have worsened with the proclamation. Not all of the Fathers stood and applauded in St. Peter’s Basilica after the proclamation. But if the Church is like a ship, it is a very large one indeed, and so a corrective measure made at the helm does not always set the boat on course immediately. It sometimes takes time for her to swing around; but since the rudder is under the direction of the very Vicar of Christ, as the rudder moves, so moves the ship, without fail.

We have seen, for example, that by 1973 the American bishops taught about Mary with deepened understanding. In the decades following the proclamation there has also been some good scholarly work done on Mary as Mother of the Church. We have cited here and in the thesis many articles and books, including those by Galot, Laurentin, Pozo, Balic, Roschini, Llamera, Esquerda Bifet, Aldama, Molina Prieto, Garrido Bonaño, Ortega, Koehler, Casanovas Cortés, Ordóñez Márquez, Mansell, Padovano, de la Potterie, Shea, and Ratzinger. There are many others that we have not cited, including, surprisingly, some protestant theologians.
Some mariologists have found in the title a reaffirmation and safeguarding of ancient Marian truths, such as the universal mediation of Mary, her spiritual maternity and her formal cooperation in redemption. Others have seen in the title a path toward placing Mary within her proper theological context. Just as the Council’s decision to place the Marian document within the Constitution on the Church related her to the Church, so Mater Ecclesiae places her in relationship to Christ and the Church and diminishes the temptation to place her on a pedestal apart from God and his overall plan of redemption. Mary’s glory, after all, is a reflected glory. Her soul «proclaims the greatness of the Lord», as she declares in the Magnificat. She does not proclaim her own grandeur; on the contrary, she exists only in relationship to the Trinity and to serve Him by serving his creatures.

Monsegú and Villalmonte see the ecclesial maternity as a reality relating the Church intrinsically to Christ. Villalmonte even opines that Mary’s function as Theotokos is less important than Mary’s function as the Mother of the Church, because the Church consists of Christ and Christians. Without endorsing in an unqualified way his view, it is interesting to point out how this complements what we have written about Mary and the ecclesiology of communio.

From the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council we understand that the Church is a divine-human communio. The ontological reality of that communion forged in the Person of Christ is confirmed by Mary’s ecclesial maternity, because the only possible way for her to be really, continuously and causally the Mother of the Church is if the Church is substantively the same being as the Son born of her and nurtured and loved by her up until today. In other words, if we understand the Church as a communio between God and man, then to call Mary the «Mother of the Church», is to call her, in the same breath, both «Mother of God» and «Mother of Christians!» The divine maternity and the spiritual maternity of Mary are one and inseparable!

Therefore, to understand the Church is to understand Mary. Of course, the opposite is also true; as Pope Paul said in the proclamation speech: «Knowledge of true Catholic doctrine on the Blessed Virgin Mary will always be an effective aid to proper
understanding of the mystery of Christ and the Church. This is one of the main fruits of the proclamation—one that we do not think many theologians have grasped and one that would bear much more study—: namely, that to affirm that Mary is the Mother of the Church is to teach that God and man are one in the communion of the Church.

Within this fruit we find another, namely, the healing of mariology. When the ecclesial maternity is correctly understood, when Mary is known for all that she is, we see her as more intrinsically relational at every step. That Mary is the Mother of the Church should not only build a bridge between Catholic Marian «maximalists» and «minimalists», but it should even build a bridge between Catholics and non-Catholics. To understand Mary’s role in Redemption means necessarily to understand Christ’s role better and to understand our role as well. There can be no fear on the part of the «minimalists» that this teaching hides Christ behind Mary, for just the opposite is true; the reality of the ecclesial maternity teaches with new clarity the intimacy and inseparability between the Redeemer and the redeemed.

The first half of Karl Rahner’s grundaxiom seems indisputable, namely, that the immanent Trinity is the same as the transcendent Trinity. In Pope Paul’s teaching on Mary, we have a beautiful Marian corollary to that axiom. Mary does not exist in an exclusive relationship with God. She is certainly the closest creature to God, the one that most glorifies Him and pleases Him. But Mary is not merely «transcendent»; she is also «immanent», by her very nature. And Mater Ecclesiae unites Mary «transcendent» with Mary «immanent.» She not only relates uniquely and intensely with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but that very relationship in turn directs her to a unique, universal relationship with us. She is our Mother by mothering Christ.

Why? Because the Church is the prolongation and coming to full stature of Christ. As Monsegú writes, «The Christ of the Church and the Christ of Mary are the same Christ: the full expression of the great Christian mystery, the total Christ. The Marian Movement (which had exalted «transcendent» Mary for centuries) ended sharply with the crisis in mariology and the victory of the Ecclesiotypical school in the Council. But the great Marian chapter of Lumen Gentium together with Pope Paul’s pro-
clamation of her as Mother of the Church has balanced mariology and Marian piety by placing her in relationship to salvation history, by placing her in an intrinsic, profound relationship with Christ and his Church.

No one understands this better than the successor of Pope Paul. Pope John Paul II has not only confirmed the Marian magisterium of Paul, he has made it a central part of his own magisterium and even of his spiritual life! Pope John Paul II, from the first seconds of his papacy, has taught Mary’s ecclesial maternity. As he himself narrates, in his first papal encyclical:

On the sixteenth of October of last year, when, after the canonical election [to the papacy], I was asked, «Do you accept?» I then replied: «With obedience in faith to Christ, my Lord, and with trust in the Mother of Christ and of the Church, in spite of the great difficulties, I accept.»

With the very first words of his papacy, he entrusts himself to the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church.

In sections III, IV and V we documented how Pope Paul VI explained Mater Ecclesiae in his teaching after the proclamation and how he understood her motherhood in social terms according to the ecclesiology of communio taught by the Council. Pope John Paul II has continued this line of thought with theological and philosophical consistency. Cardinal Wojtyla was one of the architects of the ecclesiology of koinonia. He also was a member of the national episcopacy (the Polish) that was most supportive of the proclamation of Mater Ecclesiae. Little wonder he entrusted his papacy to the Mother of the Church.

To implement the teachings of the Second Vatican Council has been a central goal in both the papacy of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. And Pope John Paul II has called the ecclesiology of communion the, «central and fundamental idea of the Council’s documents».

Pope Paul taught the foundational nature of Trinitarian-human communion for the Church by affirming Mary’s maternity over the Church. Pope John Paul II has continued with clarity this line of thinking. At an address in Washington D. C., for ex-
ample, Pope John Paul taught that Mary at Pentecost, «conceives again of the Holy Spirit, to bring forth Jesus in the fullness of his Body, the Church» 164.

The Church is a structured communion, teaches Lumen Gentium; and Mary as Mother of the Church is mother of a body which is highly organized and composed of members who live in mutual complementarity according to God’s providence. In section V we explored Pope Paul’s clear understanding of Mary’s maternal role over that whole, complex, familial Church. If any doubts remained regarding the Church’s magisterium on the subject, again John Paul has confirmed his predecessor’s thought consistently. He has said, for instance, that Mary’s fiat made the hierarchy possible 165. And elsewhere, Mary’s fiat «makes her the Mother of the whole Christ» 166.

The Mother of the Church is the mother of the communio of humanity in Christ. Mary is Mater Communionis. She once caused (instrumentally) the divine-human communion in the Church. Now, as the maternal associate of Christ, she nurtures that vertical and horizontal communion and helps mend it where human sins rend. Finally, as the «first Church» and the perfect eschatological type of the Church, the Virgin Mother is herself the model for human communion with the Father, in the Spirit through Christ. She is also a model of inter-personal communion with the apostles and the disciples. No pride or selfishness scars her mind or heart, so she exists and teaches us to exist in perfect harmony with the members of the Body of Christ who surround us-in the harmony forged by humble obedience to the relationships given to us by God. The Mother of communio teaches us to act as social Christians, dependent on God and on others, and ready to empty ourselves through self-donative love so that we too may be active instruments in the construction of holy communion, so that we too may hasten the time «when God may be all in all» 167.
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3. See our doctoral thesis for a view of the struggle over the inclusion of the Marian title in Lumen Gentium. The outcome of the struggle was negative; the title was not included, perhaps in some measure precisely because it had been so conflictual. Recall n. 54 of Lumen Gentium: «The Synod does not have to decide those questions which have not yet been fully illuminated by the work of theologians. Those opinions therefore may be lawfully retained which are freely propounded by schools of Catholic thought.»


5. A claim which is blatantly false. The Fathers had voted to approve a document which did not have the title; they had never voted to disapprove a document which did contain it. Furthermore, to contradict the Council, the Pope would have had to have re-inserted the title into Lumen Gentium. The newspaper article is quoted in WILTGEN, page 243.

6. WILTGEN 235.

7. WILTGEN 241.


9. From an article published by Fr. SCHILLEBEECKX in the Dutch journal De Bazuin, Jan. 23, 1965. Against the Dutch press he defended Pope Paul’s action to include a Preliminary Explanatory Note with Chapter Three of the Constitution, so the Fathers would be clearer on the limits of collegiality. Quoted by WILTGEN, page 242.


11. DS 3063.

12. Pope JOHN PAUL II is perhaps a more centrally Marian man while the thought of Pope Paul is more centrally ecclesiological, but we cannot doubt Paul’s ferrous attachment to Our Lady, and his views of her influence in the world and the Church are sometimes even shocking. The very last words that the Pope would say to the Council Fathers (and to the world in a conciliar setting) cast the entire Ecumenical Council in Marian light. In the closing speeches of the fourth and final session, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1965, Pope Paul belies the cynical notion that the new world order preached and hoped for by the Council is
simply a utopian poem. The ideals aspired to in the conciliar documents are not unreal, says the Pope, because «Man preserves an unquenchable yearning toward ideal and total perfection... The drama of man is the drama of a fallen king.»

And in Mary the ideal meets the real. She is an individual, existential utopia! He ends his discourse and ends the work of the twenty-first Ecumenical Council saying that Mary is the terminus of the spiritual ascent of the Council, and she is the starting place for all post-conciliar work. He sums up the Council, all of its theology, sociology, anthropology, all of its pomp and press, all of its conclusions, its praxis, its doxa, its plans and its prayers,... all in one embarrassing, humble, four-letter word: Mary! See AAS 58 (1966) 7-8.


16. AAS 56 (1964) 37.

17. AAS 56 (1964) 1016.

18. See Chapter Two of our thesis.


21. We do not claim here that the proclamation was an infallible statement ex cathedra; however, filial assent is due to formal papal teaching directed toward all the faithful, even when that teaching is not dogma de fide. (See Lumen Gentium, n. 25. b.)

22. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council reaffirm this in Lumen Gentium n. 25. b.

23. Mt. 7: 29.

24. In his Proslogion, proemium.

25. Father Philips wrote that this was one of the Pope’s motivations; indeed, Pope Paul mentions the petitions made to him by some of the Fathers and that the title had been requested «by various parts of the Catholic world» [AAS 56 (1964) 1015]. So this was a motivation, but only one among many.


28. See section II of our first chapter for the recent history of mariology.


30. Lumen Gentium n. 53. b.

31. Lumen Gentium n. 54.

32. See number 18 of Lumen Gentium, which is a repetition of the teaching of Vatican I’s Pastor Aeternus, DS 3051.

33. AAS 56 (1964): 1016.


35. Not only does the declaration teach a certain superiority of Mary to the Church, and thereby outmode some of the thought of the Ecclesiotypical
school, but the Pope gives a quick theological justification for the title which helps resolve another aspect of the Marian debate.

He points to the true «fundamental principle» of mariology. The Ecclesiotypical school taught that Mary’s role as prototype of the Church was the fundamental principle of mariology. The Christotypical school taught that the fundamental principle was the divine maternity.

In the text of the proclamation the Pope favors in no uncertain terms the latter position: «Just as the divine maternity is the cause of Mary’s singular relationship with Christ,... so the divine maternity is the source of those relationships that exist between Mary and the Church.... Mary, as the Mother of Christ, must be regarded as the Mother of all the faithful and the bishops, which means of the Church.» See AAS 56 (1964) 1015.

36. Father Jelly, summarizing this reality, maintains that the early versions of the Marian text in the Council were markedly Christotypical and that the finally approved schema was Ecclesiotypical. The Holy Father would have us read the text as simply coming from the mind of God as He expresses himself in the Church, and not as the expression of any school. Perhaps, then, the papal teaching on the Mother of the Church, should be seen as a sort of check and balance against an exaggeratedly Ecclesiotypical perspective. See: Frederick Jelly, «The Theological Context and Introduction to Chapter 8 of Lumen Gentium», Marian Studies 37 (1986): 48.


38. AAS 56 (1964) 1015.

39. AAS 56 (1964) 1016.


41. AS III: 8: 919.

42. José Luis MARTÍN, Un periodista en el Concilio: 2ª etapa (Madrid: Propaganda Popular Católica, 1964) 269.


44. «Igitur ad Beatae Virginis gloriam ad nostrumque solacium, Mariam Sanctissimam deelaramus Matrem Ecclesiae.» AAS 56 (1964): 1015.

45. See: MONTINI, Sulla Madonna 209.

46. AS I: 4: 92.

47. AAS 55 (1963): 873.


49. AAS 56 (1964): 1015.

50. In the encyclical letter, Christi Matri, Pope Paul wrote: «We want constant and devout prayers to be offered to her whom we declared Mother of the Church, its spiritual parent, during the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, thereby winning the applause of the Fathers and of the Catholic world and confirming a point of traditional doctrine.» AAS 58 (1966): 747.

51. This is René Laurentin’s claim in the introduction to his compilation of the Marian teachings of Papa Montini when he was still the cardinal of Milan. See: Montini, Sulla Madonna 10.

52. AAS 56 (1964): 1007.
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53. See: Lumen Gentium n. 22. c.
54. See Laurentin’s introduction to Montini, Sulla Madonna 11.
58. AAS 56 (1964): 1015 (Emphasis added.)
61. PAUL VI and Domenico BERTETTO, S. D. B., La Madonna nella parola de Paolo VI (Rome: Libreria Ataneo Salesiano, 1980) 358.
63. AAS 56 (1964): 1015.
64. AAS 57 (1965): 400.
65. AAS 57 (1965): 401-402. (Emphasis added.) The quotation from the Holy Father is from Lumen Gentium n. 53. Like the conciliar chapter on Mary as a whole, this passage does not clearly teach Mary’s ecclesial motherhood, but Pope Paul is talking about Mater Ecclesiae, and he «manipulates» the conciliar text to support his teaching.
67. Marialis cultus n. 11. (Emphasis added.)
73. Rm. 12: 4.
74. ORDÓÑEZ 112.
75. This may save the Church from artificial private devotions that are mere inventions of individuals and are foreign to Christ’s economy of salvation. The Trinity, and not man, should determine how we relate to Him.
76. Lumen Gentium n. 4. c.
77. Which is not to say that Mary does not exercise a kind of maternity over all of mankind. After all, all men are called to salvation; all are called to membership in the Body: «He wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth» (1 Tim 2: 4).
80. The error that some of our protestant brethren have fallen into of denying human cooperation in salvation ends logically, asserts Yves Congar, in the shocking error of denying that we are saved by the sacred humanity of Christ. We see here the incalculable value of mariology as an element of soteriology and christology.

«If neither the human race as such, nor the Church nor Our Lady has any active part in the work of salvation, the question cannot but occur: what of the co-operation of Christ’s human nature?» Congar, *Christ, Our Lady and the Church* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957) 19.

A minimalist mariology can lead to the heresy of monophysitism, that is, that Christ is simply God inhabiting a human body and not that He truly has a human nature and that He is truly consubstantial with us, just as He is consubstantial with the Father. Denying Mary’s cooperative maternal role in redemption can in turn lead to an erroneously pessimistic anthropology and also to an ethereal, watery ecclesiology.

81. *Marialis cultus* n. 37.
82. *Marialis cultus* n. 37.
86. *Signum magnum* AAS 59 (1967): 470. (Added italics.)
91. Address on the Feast of the Purification, February 2, 1965. AAS 57 (1965): 250. (This line is a quotation by the Pope of de Lubac’s sur l’Église.)
99. Again, by using Mary’s relationship to the Church as its type to justify the title, Pope Paul reconciles the two schools of Marian theology that were at odds before and during the Council.
100. Ordoñez, 111.
101. ORDOÑEZ, 113.
102. 1 Cor. 15: 28.
103. Marialis cultus n. 11.
104. Charles JORNET, Teología de la Iglesia, quoted in Ordóñez, 117.
110. 1 Cor. 4: 16.
111. Marialis cultus n. 57.
112. AAS 61 (1969): 726.
113. Sermo 215, 4; P. L. 38: 1074.
115. AAS 56 (1964): 1015.
116. This is, of course, not to affirm that the Church would be «loose» without Mary. We do not deny the unity of the Church in the Mystical Body of Christ enlivened by a single Holy Spirit, but neither does intellectual honesty permit us to ignore the historical events by which we are saved. The historical reality is that we are one in Jesus and Mary. As Canon Laurentin writes:

While Christ, by taking on human flesh, became fundamentally the head of the human race, Mary became fundamentally its mother. While formally he became its head by meriting Redemption on its behalf, Mary became formally its head by meriting along with him: and Christ had chosen this «hour» to proclaim her maternal mission (Jn. 19: 25-27). This motherhood of hers became effective at Pentecost, as the era of grace began. In heaven it became conscious.


118. AAS 56 (1964): 1015-1016.
119. AAS 56 (1964): 1012.
120. AAS 56 (1964): 1011.
121. AAS 57 (1965): 250-251. (Italics added.)
126. Marialis cultus n. 28.
127. ORDOÑEZ, 157.
128. GALOT, «Mère» 1180.
129. GALOT, «Mère» 1181.


137. AAS 57 (1965): 401.
140. AAS 57 (1965): 401.
142. AAS 57 (1965): 401. (The Pope ends with a line from Lumen Gentium n. 53.)

143. St. AUGUSTINE, De sancta virginitate, PL 40, 399.
144. Jn. 2: 5.
149. LLamera, «María Madre» 414.
150. Lumen Gentium n. 53.
151. ORDOÑEZ, 157.
152. Sermo 11, PL 194, 1729.


154. Behold n. 5.

156. Marian devotion does seem on the rise again, however. Indices to this are the number of pilgrims who travel to Marian shrines and places of apparent apparitions and also the phenomenon in the last two years of the multiplication of many diocesan and regional Marian conferences, especially in the United States.

158. Such is the case with Francisco Sola, S. J. in his «María, Madre de la Iglesia», Estudios Marianos 31 (1968).

162. Pope JOHN PAUL II, Redemptor hominis, March 4, 1979, n. 2. (Emphasis added.)
163. The bishops of the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 (cf. «Relatio finalis», C. 1) used these words and so has Pope John Paul (cf. Address to U. S. bishops, Oct. 2, 1993).
167. 1 Cor. 15: 28.
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