

THE BLESSED MOTHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**INTRODUCTION**

In the Annunciation as recounted in Luke's Gospel, following the Angel Gabriel's initial greeting and speech explaining the blessed event, Our Lady asks, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"¹ To which the angel responds with, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."² Following this, Mary's *fiat* begins the playing out of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. This simple reference to the Holy Spirit in Luke's Gospel carries a wealth of theological meaning.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Our Lady as explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and in the writings of both St. Louis de Montfort and St. Maximilian Kolbe. Finally, the consecrations to Our Lady as promoted by both saints will be briefly examined, compared, and contrasted.

¹ *The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (RSV)*, Luke 1:34.

² *RSV*, Luke 1:35.

MARY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CATECHISM

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* outlines a four-fold expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This expression is broken into these ways: (1) preparation, (2) fulfillment, (3) manifestation, (4) communication.

In the first way, "the Holy Spirit *prepared* Mary by his grace ... [when] she was, by sheer grace, conceived without sin as the most humble of creatures, the most capable of welcoming the inexpressible gift of the Almighty."³ The Immaculate Conception is the first expression of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady's life.

The second way is that "in Mary, the Holy Spirit *fulfills* the plan of the Father's loving goodness ... [when] the Virgin conceives and gives birth to the Son of God."⁴ Thus the Annunciation is the second expression of the Holy Spirit in our Lady's life.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, 722.

⁴ *CCC*, 723.

The third way is when "in Mary, the Holy Spirit *manifests* the Son of the Father ... the Word [made] visible in the humility of his flesh."⁵ The carrying of the unborn Savior in her womb, then, is the third expression of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady's life.

Finally, the fourth way of expression is when "through Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring men ... *into communion* with Christ."⁶ Mary's maternal role in relation with Our Lord, is the fourth expression of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady's life.

All four of these ways embrace the fullest expression of the Holy Spirit in Our Lady's life when "at the end of this mission of the Spirit, Mary became the Woman, the new Eve ('mother of the living'), the mother of the 'whole Christ.'"⁷ Our Lady's maternity is the overarching expression of the Holy Spirit's action in her life which is rooted in the Immaculate Conception and reaches its fulfillment in Our Lord's giving of her to St. John and thus

⁵ CCC, 724.

⁶ CCC, 725.

⁷ CCC, 726.

to all believers as he died on Calvary.⁸ Thus, "Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son."⁹

MARY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WRITINGS OF DE MONTFORT

St. Louis de Montfort, the Apostle of Mary, develops Our Lady's relationship with the Holy Spirit by drawing upon the Fathers of the Church as well as his own devotion. At the beginning of his *True Devotion to Mary*, already in the preliminary remarks, he identifies Our Lady as "the sealed fountain and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit where only he may enter."¹⁰ As spouse, Mary provides a way for the Holy Spirit to express His fruitfulness. Yet, "this does not mean Blessed Virgin confers on the Holy Spirit a fruitfulness which he does not already possess. Being God, he has the ability to produce just like the Father and the Son, although he does not use this power and so does not produce another divine person. But it does mean

⁸ Cf. *RSV*, John 19:25.

⁹ *CCC*, 2674.

¹⁰ St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, (Irondale, AL: Eternal Word Television Network, 1998), 5.

that the Holy Spirit chose to make use of our Blessed Lady, although he had no absolute need of her, in order to become actively fruitful in producing Jesus Christ and his members in her and by her."¹¹ In this, the action of the Holy Spirit in and by Mary in the Annunciation brought about the birth of Jesus Christ, and in a similar manner "the birth and growth of Christ in the soul ... [implies] a continuity between conception of Christ in Mary and the birth of the elect today. Sanctification is a continuation of the Incarnation."¹² Thus, it is the Holy Spirit working through Our Lady that brings about the birth of all Christians as members of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

In addition to choosing to work in and by Our Lady at the Annunciation, "God the Holy Spirit entrusted his wondrous gifts to Mary, his faithful spouse, and chose her as the dispenser of all he possesses, so that she distributes all his gifts and graces to whom she wills, as much as she wills, how she wills and when she wills. No heavenly gift is given to men which does not pass through her virginal

¹¹ *True Devotion to Mary*, 20-21.

¹² *Jesus Living in Mary: Handbook of the Spirituality of St. Louis Marie de Montfort*, (Bay Shore, NY: Montfort Publications, 1994), p. 498.

hands. Such indeed is the will of God, who has decreed that we should have all things through Mary, so that, making herself poor and lowly, and hiding herself in the depths of nothingness during her whole life, she might be enriched, exalted and honoured by almighty God. Such are the views of the Church and the early Fathers."¹³ In this role as Mediatrix of All Graces, the Holy Spirit "dispenses his graces to us only through her ... Mary, in union with the Holy Spirit, still conceives him and brings him forth daily. It is through her alone that the Son distributes his merits and virtues. The Holy Spirit formed Jesus only through her, and he forms the members of the Mystical Body and dispenses his gifts and his favours through her."¹⁴ Thus by the choice of God, Our Lady is the channel through which all graces are poured out onto mankind.

In addition, St. Louis de Montfort uses many 'spousal' expressions to refer to Our Lady's relationship with the Holy Spirit, calling her 'spouse of the Holy Spirit, dear spouse, faithful spouse, inseparable spouse, fruitful

¹³ *True Devotion to Mary*, 25.

¹⁴ *True Devotion to Mary*, 140.

spouse.’¹⁵ Yet like any human analogy used to describe a relationship with God, “this expression is inadequate, for the Holy Spirit is not the father of Jesus Christ, ... and it is necessary to retain an awareness of the limits of this formula, as [St. Louis de] Montfort did, at least implicitly.”¹⁶ St. Louis de Montfort recognized the intimacy of the relationship between Our Lady and the Holy Spirit, but also recognized the inability of human language to express certain higher spiritual truths.

Moving beyond the action of the Holy Spirit through Mary as spouse and as Mediatrix of All Graces, St. Louis de Montfort “was intensely aware of the close links, the privileged links, between Mary and the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷ While seeking to articulate this, he “does not confuse the roles of Mary and the Holy Spirit. For him, it is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is God and that Mary is the humble creature whom God required to make Himself a gift of human humility and weakness.”¹⁸ The best summary of this is: where Mary is, there is the Holy Spirit; and where the

¹⁵ Cf. *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 502.

¹⁶ *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 502.

¹⁷ *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 499.

¹⁸ *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 501.

Holy Spirit is, there is Mary. "He leads to her, and she leads to Him Who brings everything about."¹⁹ There is a balance in this relationship, "a mutual harmony. It is not that they can be substituted for each other, but their moral union means that the idioms expressing the maternal role of Mary and of the Spirit can be interchanged, whilst their roles are clearly distinguished ontologically."²⁰ Thus, Mary is a visible "expression, a representation, an image, an icon – but also a temple of the Spirit, for He dwells in her."²¹ In this way, St. Louis de Montfort saw that Our Lady and the Holy Spirit shared certain roles, yet not equally due to the inability of a finite creature to reflect the infinitude of a Divine Person.

Thus, for St. Louis de Montfort, Our Lady's roles can be summarized as threefold: (1) as spouse, (2) as Mediatrix, and (3) as a visible expression of the Holy Spirit. Her relationship with the Holy Spirit is so intimate that it resembles a marriage, yet differs in such orders of mag-

¹⁹ *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 501.

²⁰ *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 501.

²¹ *Jesus Living in Mary*, p. 502.

nitude because of the differences in human and Divine natures.

MARY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WRITINGS OF MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

St. Maximilian Kolbe developed his Mariology in such a way as to reveal "the hidden relationship between the Spirit of God and the Virgin of Nazareth."²² In many ways he built upon previous theologians "such as St. Louis de Montfort, [who] emphasize Mary's Divine Motherhood as being the basis for this teaching, [St. Maximilian] Kolbe views Mary's universal mediation of grace as primarily being linked and drawn from her intimate and hidden relationship with the Holy Spirit."²³ Beginning with St. Maximilian Kolbe's definition of the Holy Spirit which is "the flowering of the love of the Father and the Son ... The Father begets; the Son is begotten; the [Holy] Spirit is the 'conception' that springs from their love ... The [Holy] Spirit is, then ... this infinitely holy, Immaculate Conception."²⁴

²² Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, February 2, 1974, 27.

²³ Dwight P. Campbell, "The Holy Spirit and Mary" in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, May 1993, p. 12.

²⁴ Fr. H. M. Manteau-Bonamy, OP, *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: The Marian Teachings of St. Maximilian Kolbe*, (Libertyville, IL: Marytown Press, 2001), p. 3.

Thus, the saint "terms the Holy Spirit the *eternal* Immaculate Conception and Mary the *human* Immaculate Conception."²⁵ Thus, "the same [Holy] Spirit who from all eternity is the Immaculate Conception in the bosom of the Trinity, makes of Mary another Immaculate Conception. The change is not in the [Divine] Person who has been sent, for he too is eternal and immutable, but in this creature who was, from her life's first moment, united to the third Person [of the Trinity], the source of all fruitful Love."²⁶ This very closely parallels the idea of Mary as both Mediatrix of All Graces as well as 'image' or 'icon' of the Holy Spirit presented in the writings of St. Louis de Montfort. Yet here we see what appears to be the taking on of a spouses name in marriage. Where in human marriage, the wife takes on the name of her husband, Our Lady's Immaculate Conception is a finite sharing in the Trinitarian procession that brings about the Holy Spirit as the eternal and infinite Immaculate Conception. Furthermore, this valuable dogma on Our Lady's Immaculate Conception was not settled at the time of St. Louis de Montfort.

²⁵ Madeleine Grace, C.V.I., "The Spirit and Maximilian Kolbe" in *The Priest*, September 1998, p. 42.

²⁶ *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, p. 61.

Reflecting upon the title of Mary as 'Spouse of the Holy Spirit' St. Maximilian Kolbe "expresses dissatisfaction with this term, saying that 'spouse' is really inadequate to describe this intimate and mysterious relationship. In matrimony a man and woman become united through sacramental grace so as to become in a mystical way, 'one flesh.' But [St. Maximilian] Kolbe sees the union between Mary and the Holy Spirit being even more intimate than that of spouses in marriage."²⁷ The union between Our Lady and the Holy Spirit "is a oneness or communion of two persons and two natures remaining distinct ontologically, yet perfectly one in the order of love, such that each as person shares the same name."²⁸ Considering this union alongside the Incarnation of the Word of God, we can perhaps see the differences more clearly: "in Jesus there are two natures, divine and human, but one single person who is God. Mary's nature and person are totally distinct from the nature and person of the Holy Spirit. Still, their union is inexpressible."²⁹ This led St. Maximilian Kolbe to express

²⁷ "The Holy Spirit and Mary", p. 13.

²⁸ Fr. Peter Damian Fehlner, FI, *St. Maximilian M. Kolbe, Martyr of Charity: Pneumatologist, His Theology of the Holy Spirit*, (New Bedford, CT: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), p. 107.

²⁹ *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, p. 40.

the following formula: "The Son is incarnate: Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is quasi incarnate: the Immaculata."³⁰ The wording while sounding quite bold is, more to the point, precise. "The Holy Spirit is 'quasi' (in some manner) incarnate, without being really and strictly incarnate; for Mary ... [is] taken up by the Holy Spirit in all her being, as a woman and as a mother."³¹ The writings of St. Maximilian Kolbe provide an understanding of "the Immaculate Conception [as] the 'first principle' of Mariology, because it deals with that which constitutes her as human person intrinsically pertaining to the order of the hypostatic union; thus understood this consecration is properly maternal: to be Mother of God and Mother of the Church."³²

A further reflection on the intimate union of Mary with the Holy Spirit leads to seeing this union as "the model or prototype of the union of the Church and the [Holy] Spirit. It is fascinating to consider the intimacy of this union of Mary and the [Holy] Spirit because this is what is in store for us as Purified Bride of Christ [that

³⁰ *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, p. 61.

³¹ *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*, p. 62.

³² *St. Maximilian M. Kolbe, Martyr of Charity*, p. 92.

is, the Church.]”³³ In addition, “through the power of the Holy Spirit the Church like Mary is to be the spotless Bride, mediating the redemption and salvation of Christ to all mankind.”³⁴

The hidden relationship between Our Lady and the Holy Spirit is shown to be a union somewhere between marriage and the Incarnation. This relationship results in the sharing of the title ‘Immaculate Conception’ between the Holy Spirit and Our Lady, yet with a significant difference in orders of magnitude. Furthermore, it is from the Immaculate Conception that any mediating role of Our Lady is even possible. Mary was so surrendered to the Holy Spirit that their wills were as one will, while at the same time the human and divine natures and persons were not changed.

CONSECRATION ACCORDING TO DE MONTFORT AND KOLBE

Both St. Louis de Montfort and St. Maximilian Kolbe promoted consecration to Our Lady according to their own methods and understandings. “Though they deeply converge in

³³ Gerald J. Farrell, M.M., George W. Kosicki, C.S.B., *The Spirit and the Bride Say, ‘Come!’: Mary’s Role in the New Pentecost*, (Ashbury, NJ: AMI Press, 1981), pp. 45-46.

³⁴ *The Spirit and the Bride Say, ‘Come!’*, p. 48.

conceiving the consecration as a 'total self-giving to Mary,' they have very different ways of presenting this total offering and its goals because of their different historical, cultural, and spiritual backgrounds."³⁵ In general, "the term, 'Consecration' comes from the root 'holy' (Hebrew *qds*/קדש, Greek *hag*/ἅγιος) and fundamentally means that a person, place, or thing is sanctified ... [thus] to be consecrated ... [means] being separated from the profane through a sharing in the life of God."³⁶

St. Louis de Montfort's consecration is not based on any "special theological roots ... [rather] it is ... the full flowering of the principles he has laid down in the first section of [True Devotion]."³⁷ This form of consecration is (1) Trinitarian and Christocentric, (2) total, (3) a renewal of baptismal promises, (4) Marian, and (5) apostolic.³⁸ The consecration is preceded by a thirty-three day preparation period which focuses on (1) rejecting the spirit of the world, (2) knowing oneself, (3) knowing Mary,

³⁵ Fr. Luigi Faccenda, *One More Gift: Total Consecration to the Immaculata According to the Spirituality of St. Maximilian Kolbe*, (West Covina, CA: Immaculata Press, 1990).

³⁶ *Jesus Living In Mary*, p. 201.

³⁷ *Jesus Living In Mary*, p. 208.

³⁸ *Jesus Living In Mary*, p. 199.

and (4) knowing Jesus.³⁹ This period of just over three weeks concludes with a consecration prayer which consists of the renewal of baptismal promises and the consecration to Jesus under the title of Divine Wisdom through the Blessed Mother as her slave.⁴⁰

St. Maximilian Kolbe, "emphasized consecration to Mary as the Immaculate Conception and gave it a specific apostolic purpose: to gain the whole world for the Immaculata so as to bring about, as soon as possible, the kingdom of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."⁴¹ This consecration is based on four pillars, which are: (1) union between contemplation and action, (2) obedience, (3) readiness to give one's life for others, and (4) suffering willed out of love.⁴² The form of the consecration is as a "total offering to the Immaculata [meaning] to belong to her as her own property."⁴³ The prayer of consecration is addressed to Our Lady under the title of Immaculata, and unlike the de Montfort conse-

³⁹ Fr. Helmut Libietis, *St. Louis de Montfort's True Devotion Consecration to Mary*, (Kansas City, MO: Angelus Press, 1998), p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Consecration to Mary*, p. 374.

⁴¹ *One More Gift*, p. 46.

⁴² *One More Gift*, p. 71f.

⁴³ *One More Gift*, p. 72.

cration, there is no set period of preparation beforehand, although confession and communion are recommended.

Both consecrations reflect the "original and unique personalities"⁴⁴ of the specific saints, but there is also "a complimentary originality between the two Saints' doctrines of consecration to Mary."⁴⁵

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

The relationship of the Holy Spirit and Our Lady is tied to her role as Mother of the Church. From the perspective of St. Louis de Montfort, Our Lady's roles arise from her relationship to the three Persons of the Trinity. Whereas for St. Maximilian Kolbe, Our Lady's unique relationship to the Holy Spirit which began in her Immaculate Conception and continues for all eternity is the basis for her roles. Without the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, St. Louis de Montfort struggles to elaborate on the relationship between Our Lady and the Holy Spirit; whereas St. Maximilian Kolbe was able to better delve into the depths of their unique relationship.

⁴⁴ *One More Gift*, p. 46.

⁴⁵ *One More Gift*, p. 46.

The formulae for consecration prescribed by both saints, while sharing similar ideas reflect the unique aspects of their spirituality. St. Louis de Montfort's consecration is to Jesus through Our Lady as a slave or servant; compared to St. Maximilian Kolbe's consecration which is to Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception as her property with the purpose of hastening the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the world.

The importance of the Immaculate Conception in the development of St. Maximilian Kolbe's Mariology and in his formula for consecration highlights the importance of defining dogmas. The solemn definition of dogma, rather than constraining theological development, instead leads to a further flowering of ideas by providing an anchor point from which to launch new doctrinal developments.