



78

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THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS A FULL OF GRACE MEDIATRIX OF THE HOPE OF SALVATION

IN THE TEACHING OF JOSEPH RATZINGER - BENEDICT XVI

One of the oldest Marian prayer *We fly to your patronage*, names Mary directly the Mediatrix, thus giving voice to faith and hope in an efficacy of Her intercession, and an advocacy to God in our affairs. Therefore, we have an early evidence, which theological content we find out in other texts of prayers and religious songs too. One should even mention the song *The Mother of God*, which presents not only a valuable monument of the Polish medieval religious song, but it also expresses a cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary of that time. The song contains a prayer, combined with a pleading addressed to Mary, for an intercession of Christ, aimed for hearing our entreaties and wheedling us generous graces.¹ As valuable testimonials, one may also acknowledge the numerous votive offerings, that are placed in different Marian shrines, which authenticate the mediation of Mary in a certain manner. A title of the Mediatrix is related to the Blessed Virgin, and at the same time it is also inherently connected with her maternity role towards the

1 D. Brzeziński, A. R. Żabowska, *Kult Najświętszej Maryi Panny w „Bogurodzicy” – najcenniejszym zabytku polskiej średniowiecznej pieśni religijnej*, „Studia Płockie” 31(2003), p. 67-79.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS A FULL OF GRACE MEDIATRIX...

Son of God's. Almost from the beginning, this title appears in theological texts of Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in theological treatises, liturgical books, doctrinal and polemical writings, preaching and catechesis. Mary is named the Mediatrix "between the God and a humanity, and between Jesus and people. She serves as the Mediatrix to God, so He could become man in Jesus, and through Him to come down right to us, and to redeem us. She serves as the Mediatrix to man, so (...) he could rise to the Father and find a mercy, a grace and a glory with Him. She serves as the Mediatrix also to Jesus, so He could become our brother through His human nature (...). Finally, Mary serves as the Mediatrix to all of us, so through the Deity of Jesus we could become His brothers".²

An intermediary role of Mary between the God, Christ and man appears then as a sign of salvific hope. It is not in a sense, that life of the God, His grace and benediction become available to man, supposedly only, with regard to Her and through Her. However, it is in the sense, that She herself – with regard to Her specific share in the God's life, as *the Mother of Savior* and *the Mother of Church – being the most pure, the most chaste Virgin, full of grace, a prudent and a faithful Virgin*, becomes for us through an openness *the Gate of heaven*, as the *Mother of mercy and right advice, a venerable and a prudent Virgin*, who intercedes for us, and in whom the God allows to experience Himself as *the health of the sick, the refuge of sinners, the comforter of the afflicted, and the help of Christians*.³ For us, who follow a path of faith, Mary and her life are the experience of an abundance of God's salvific work. Mary becomes then for us a path in knowing God and experiencing His salvific coming, She accompanies us and helps us to be opened to it.

As for Benedict XVI, the Mariology in this sense has a decisive importance not only for a human existence, but also for a theology and a Christian spirituality. He perceives it as "a window of hope for man, that is opened by God when 'man closes the door in front of Him'".⁴ By the mediation of Mary, a whole history of Her apparitions within the last two centuries becomes a merciful response of God to an indifference of man. Mary, the Mother of Son of God, our Savior is given to us by God as "a guide on our path" and "a light of hope", in whom we may find the way to God throughout our life and in our experiences.⁵

Mary „does not strive not for Her own greatness, but she strives for the greatness of God”, therefore following texts of Benedict XVI, we may acknowledge

2 C. Lacrampe, *Wszechpośrednictwo Najświętszej Maryi Panny*, Lublin 1929, p. 21-22.

3 The callings from the Litany of Loreto.

4 *Światłość świata. Papież, Kościół i znaki czasu* [conv. P. Seewald], transl. P. Napiwodzki, Kraków 2011, p. 170.

5 Ibid, s. 171; cf *Dlaczego wierzę? Przesłanie pontyfikatu 2005-2013*, transl. A. M. Stefańska, Kraków 2013, p. 45.

Her as a full of grace Mediatrix of the hope of a salvation. Since “she is the woman of faith. Her thoughts remain in a syntony with the thoughts of God, Her will goes hand in hand with the Will of God”.⁶ She is the Mediatrix for us in recognizing the truth, in listening to the Word, in witnessing the hope, in an openness for God’s affairs, in a mutual concern about the divine life.

A reciprocity of a mediation

Why does Mary participate in this path of man to God in an exceptional way, by becoming almost like “a bridge” that connects man with Christ, Her Son, in Whom only we have an access to the Father? Joseph Ratzinger explains that the mediation of Mary derives from Christ, and it is hierarchically subordinated to Him, in the sense that it possesses a real effectiveness from Him.⁷ Mary is the Mother of people in an order of mercy. Her maternal function is not competitive with the salvific primacy of Christ, because Mary – the Mother, She is the first to Christ, but the first disciple of faith, whose responsibility is to strengthen the unification of Christ with His disciples in faith.

Ratzinger notices, that „uniqueness of Christ does not resolve a mutual responsibility and a communion of people in front of God, since in a union with Christ, people can be intermediaries one to another to God in many ways. This is a primary evidence of our daily experience, since no one believes on his own – everybody experiences his faith using also human mediations. None of them would be able to drop a bridge in the direction to God, because no man can assure himself the existence of God and His closeness in an absolute way. However, when united with God, who is the closeness in a personal manner, people can be mediators for each other, and they really are”.⁸ This way, the Theologian let us to perceive a mediation, including that one of Mary, in a wider sense. Although we always have the Salvation from Christ, all of us is invited to continue His redemptive work and to participate in many works and activities, He has already undertaken and He still takes. The only salvific mediation of Christ “does not exclude a mutual and collective interceding of people with God. They can be the mediators with God one to another in many ways, in a community with Jesus Christ”. We redeem ourselves by mutual serving each other and by helping each other, “it is a very simple content of our common religious experience, as no one believes in a loneliness, each of us

6 *Dlaczego wierzę?*, op. cit., p. 68.

7 M. G. Masciarelli, *Znak niewiasty. Maryja w teologii Josepha Ratzingera*, Kraków 2008, transl. W. Szymona, p. 109-110.

8 J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła Córa Syjonu*, transl. J. Królikowski, Poznań 2002, p. 71.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS A FULL OF GRACE MEDIATRIX...

experiences his faith also through different human mediations”.⁹ The mediation like that seems to be a calling in a daily life of man, as by participating in the triple mission of Christ: a priestly, a prophetic and a royal, man becomes “a helper of God” in the accomplishment of the work of Salvation.¹⁰

Therefore, one should understand the only salvific mediation of Christ “not in the terms of an exclusivity – exclusively, but inclusively. It means there many different ways to participate in it”, as the salvific mediation underpins and supports other forms of mediations.¹¹ Although Mary has a very special place in this participation, Her mediation is not perceived in an absolute way: “The Virgin Mary did not redeem herself (it is the sense of the Immaculate Conception) and she did not choose herself for the Mother of Savior (it is the sense of the Annuntiation). She did not join the mission of the Church by her own, an autonomous decision (it is the sense of the Pentecost), and finally, she did not enshrine herself (it is the sense of the Assumption)”.¹² Being chosen particularly as the Mother of Son of God, Mary is invited in a very special way, to participate in the Salvation work and the mediation of Her Son. Thus, the way of Her involvement is incomparable with an involvement of anyone else: „although the mediation of Mary is all along in line with the cooperation of other human beings in the work of Salvation, however it bears a mark of an *extraordinariness*; Her mediation has a specific nature, and it surpasses in a special and unrepeatable way all the ways of mediation that are essentially possible for every man in the community of saints”.¹³

The Mediatrix in the Mediator

Basically, in the writings of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, an exceptional-ity of Mary’s mediation does not go beyond a teaching of the *Vaticanum secundum* (particularly chapter VIII *Lumen Gentium*), the Encyclical of John Paul II *Redemptoris Mater*, and an exegesis of the Scripture’s text used in the above Encyclical.¹⁴ Ratzinger indicates several aspects of this specific mediation of Mary. First of all, this is Mary’s part in the mystery of the Incarnation. This is not only that Mary participates in an existential mediation of Christ through Her consent to a motherhood

9 Ibid; cf J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja w tajemnicy Kościoła*, transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2008, p. 46.

10 CfCC No. 34-36.

11 J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja*, *op. cit.*, s. 46; J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła*, *op. cit.* p. 70.

12 M. G. Masciarelli, *Znak*, *op.cit.* p. 112.

13 M. I. Miravalle, *Maryja Współodkupicielka Pośredniczka Orędowniczka*, Santa Barbara, CA, 1993, p. 54.

14 Cf J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Batlhasar, *Maryja*, *op.cit.*, p. 45n.; J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła*, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

of the Son of God, and becoming His mother in a human order. Her permission allows the work of Salvation to be fulfilled in the world, and She herself becomes like “a cause of the salvation for herself and for others”.¹⁵ Secondly, a mediatory nature of Mary becomes visible in her unity of life with Son during His earthly existence, that was particularly manifested during the Passion and death of Christ. In the work of Redemption that is taking place in the life of Her Son, Mary joins Her suffering with a salutary suffering of Her Son, and through a spiritual motherhood, she becomes a mother of all people in order of grace.¹⁶ Her maternal mediation is being accomplished within the Church, that follows a path of faith, hope and love towards a community with God in the Kingdom of Heaven: „a maternity of Mary lasts permanently in the economy of grace – from the permission, that she clearly expressed at the Annunciation and sustained without wavering beneath the cross – until the eternal fulfillment of all the elected. Although taken up to heaven, she does not lay aside this salvific duty but through Her various mediation, she constantly wins over gifts of the eternal salvation to us. Because of Her maternal love, She cares for the brothers of Her Son, who are exposed to troubles and dangers on their pilgrimage way, until they get into the homeland. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin is named in the Church as the Patroness, the Helper, the Mediatrix. These titles however neither remove nor add a dignity and an efficiency into the acting of Christ, the only Mediator.¹⁷ The maternal mediation of Mary, which was initiated

15 CCC No. 511: The Virgin Mary “actively cooperated with a free will and an obedience in the work of human salvation” (Vatican Council II, const. *Lumen gentium*, 56). She pronounced Her “yes” “*loco totus humanae naturae*” – on behalf of the whole human race (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sunama theologiae*, III, 30, 1). By Her obedience She became the new Eva, the Mother of the living; CCC No.494: answering the announcement that She will bear the “Son of the Most High God”, unknowing Her husband, with a might of the Holy Spirit (Cf Luke I, 28-37). Mary replied with an „obedience of faith” (LR 1, 5), being assured that “there is nothing impossible to God”: “Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word”.(Luke 1, 37-38). This way, accepting the word of God, Mary became the Mother of Jesus and by embracing God’s salvific Will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, She devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of Her Son, under Him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. (Cf. Vatican Council II, const. *Lumen gentium*, 56). For, as St. Irenaeus says, She “being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” Therefore some of the early Fathers assert in their preaching with him: “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith”; making then such a comparison with Eve, they call Mary “mother of the living” and still more often they say: “death through Eve, life through Mary” (Vatican Council II, const. *Lumen gentium*, 56).

16 CC No. 61: „Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.”; cf John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*; No. 24, 47.

17 CC No. 62.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS A FULL OF GRACE MEDIATRIX...

in the Incarnation, contributed to a change in the history. Because Mary allowed the Savior to enter into it, and further by cooperating with His work, She remained alongside until His death, *becoming a sign of an unfailing hope in a fight against the might of darkness*,¹⁸ and accomplishing “the maternal responsibility towards the fellows of Christ from heaven of giving birth and increasing a Divine life in the souls of redeemed people”.¹⁹

The full of grace Mother of worshippers

It seems simply necessary for the Pope, to see a mystery of Mary in the light of a special way She was beloved by God. This is also pivotal when referring to the nature of the mediatory role of Mary. Mary is beloved in an exceptional and an inimitable way, that was concretized in the words of a greeting from an Angel messenger: „*Hail Mary, full of grace*”. The Pope Benedict underlines that the name used by the Angel does not belong to the earthly order, but this is a Divine name, since Mary is perceived as the “*beloved by God*” in the eyes of God himself in a very special way. In parallel, by referring to Origen, the Pope notices that “a similar term has not been ever used for any human nature, and it does not find its equivalent in the Holy Scriptures. The definition is expressed in a passive form, but this *passivity* of Mary, *beloved by God* since ever and forever, assumes Her freely acceptance, Her personal and original response: Mary who is beloved, and who obtains a gift from God, She is fully active, because She accepts with a full readiness, an overpowering wave of Divine love. In this aspect, She is also a perfect disciple of Her Son, since the Son, being obedient to His Father, realizes His freedom entirely, and this way He benefits from His freedom”.²⁰ There are almost two forms of an obedience, that approach each other in the mystery of the Incarnation – the obedience of Jesus, who replies a calling of Father, and the obedience of Mary, who agrees to become the Mother of Son of God. This way, a readiness of Jesus and Mary for an openness to the God’s salvific plan, is the answer to God’s Will of love, wherein one readiness mirrors the other one, and together they shape a common “Amen”.

Thus, in a certain sense *Gratia plena – kecharitomene* is Mary’s own name, the name given Her by God Himself, and resulting from being beloved by Him. This

18 Cf John Paul II, The Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*; No. 24, 47: „History of the Cross is simultaneously an interpretation of history, an indication of the sign of Woman, who participates in a fight against the might of darkness in a maternal way, and therefore She is the sign of hope”.

19 From Credo Paul VI following: J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja*, *op.cit.* p.50.

20 Benedict XVI, *Budujemy Kościół – wspólnotę miłości*, A sermon from the Ceremony of the Annunciation, St Peter Square – March 25th, 2006, in: *Radość wiary*, edit. G. Vignini, edit. of the Polish edit.M. Romanowski, Częstochowa 2012, p. 124.

is a distinguishing mark of Mary, which allows to identify a Woman in Her – a Woman, in whom there is no access to anything contrary or opposed to God. God “is fascinated” by Her faith, obedience and confidence in Him to such an extent, that He decides “to look favorably at his handmaid”. Mary, however, does not remain a passive handmaid. She takes part in the Salvific work through an entirely active will of an obedience to God’s plans – She accepts and fulfill them. In Mary, grace is the cause and the condition of freedom, as well as freedom is the cause and the condition of grace. Both they are not competitive or contradictory to each other, but they are complementary. In Mary’s life, grace and freedom unite with each other, and they serve one common purpose, which is Her acceptance and involvement in the work of Salvation.²¹ She is the person „(...) whose entire freedom is a subject to God’s Will. Her unconditional obedience to the Divine Word in revealed in Her Immaculate Conception. She adopts an obedient faith in Her life as a background to God’s activity. The engrossed Virgin lives in a full harmony with the Will of God; She retains all the words coming from God in Her memory and heart, and by composing them like in a mosaic, She learns how to understand them deeply (cf Luke 2, 19.51) (...)”.²²

The unification of grace and freedom causes, that the Word of God transforms Mary in faith, and at the same time, it results in a generosity to those, who are embraced by the God’s plan of redemption.²³ Mary Herself, being the endowed one, does not retain what She has got for Herself and in Herself only, but through an openness to God’s love in freedom, and an active obedient fulfillment of His Will, She causes a stream of God’s love and His gifts to be spread among other people by Her: “in fact, following the Angel’s Annuntiation, Mary makes Her first steps “*arising in haste*” to visit Elizabeth and to serve her (cf Luke 1, 39). The initiative of the Virgin expresses Her true love, an obedient and courageous love deriving from Her faith in the Word of God, and stimulated internally by the Holy Spirit. Whoever loves, forgives about himself and serves his fellows. This is the image and the role model of the Church! Similarly to the Mother of Christ, each community in the Church is called to accept the mystery of God with a full readiness, as God comes to live in it, and He guides it on the path of love”.²⁴

21 Cf J. Szymik, *Tam otwiera się niebo. Maryjny wymiar teologii i sztuki chrześcijańskiego życia według Josepha Ratzingera – Benedykta XVI*, „Theology in Poland” 8,2 (2014), p. 49.

22 Benedict XVI, The Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, (22.02.2007), No. 33.

23 Cf id, The Apostolic Exhortation *Dei Verbum*, (30.09.2010), No. 2.

24 Id, *Budujemy Kościół*, op.cit., p. 124.

This is both in the systematic theology of Joseph Ratzinger, and in the Papal preaching of Benedict XVI, that Mary as the Woman – full of grace and beloved by God – appears not only as a reason of God’s joy, but being Herself filled with this joy, She becomes a cause of our joy .

As a Bearer of the New Beginning of a human joy, Mary as our Mother, is an executer of a spirituality; Her soul rejoices in God, Her Savior, and She mediates in providing us this joy. In that sense, Mary becomes for us – those who are closed by own limitations and deficiencies – the one, who opens us for a participation in the joy of God, and a hope of reaching the eternal joy, offered by God in Jesus Christ. After St. Thomas Aquinas, Ratzinger finds out a reason of this status in “a holy relationship” between the Trinity and the Blessed Mother. Mary becomes “the place, where the Trinity finds His rest”, where “three Persons of the Trinity live and enjoy (...) a happiness of living in Her full of grace soul”.²⁵

Possessing such a huge endowment, Mary as the First Believer and the Mother of Believers, mediates in bearing and increasing a Divine life in souls of all believers.²⁶ Ratzinger notices clearly this mediation in the Evangelical scene of Cana in Galilee, where Mary requests a miracle, and where two acts of Mary’s mediation are present: „Cana becomes, as a remembrance and a prophecy, a symbolic place, wherein Mary could not wish *anything more, anything better, anything else, anything later*. Similarly to water jars in Cana (vide: J 2,7), Her womb was *brimfull*. In the height of Her maternity, Mary accomplished Her mediatory role in a mysterious dynamism of Cana marriage fest”.²⁷

The first act of Mary’s mediation is revealed once She recognizes, by her intellect and faith, a role to be accomplished by Her at Her Son’s side. At the same time it presumes, that She recognizes the Messiah in Her Son, and His Will. This is why a part of Mary’s maternity height becomes visible once asking Her Son for helping the just married couple in their trouble. This assumes a certain consciousness of Mary, She is confident that Her Son can solve a problem, and that He either can and want to do it. Simultaneously with a deep belief, She addresses a request to the attendees of the fest for an obedience to Her Son.

The second of the mentioned acts of Mary’s mediation refers to the servants, and it should be considered in a wider perspective, thus referring to the disciples of Jesus. After being Herself assured of what She had recognized in Her

25 Id, *The Franciscan and Dominican Masters*, transl. „L’Osservatore Romano”, Poznań 2012, p. 99, following: J. Szymik, *Tam otwiera się niebo, op.cit.*, p. 45.

26 *Maria voll der Gnade. Meditationen zum Rosenkranz*, editor. F. Johna, Freiburg im Br. 2008, p. 88.

27 M. G. Masciarelli, *Znak, op.cit.*, p. 116.

Son, Mary shows everyone whom Jesus is, and even more that He can and He wants to restore a sense and joy. Therefore, Mary does not concentrate the attention of servants on Herself, and She does not bind them with Herself, but by sending them back to Christ, She demonstrates that Her task is over and She accomplished it. She recommends the servants to follow instructions of Jesus. Mary is the Master, who teaches Christ, who indicates, who leads and asks for an obedience to Him. And Jesus works because He accepts the initiative of his Mother, and primarily because He agrees with the Will of God, his Father. Ratzinger indicates, that a role of Mary in this scene is limited only to a clear sending back to Christ. She disclosed Herself there as a teacher, who does not concentrate attention on Herself, but She sends it back beyond Herself, so the power of grace can really reach the needs of human nature there. Being Herself the full of grace, Mary knows perfectly where its source is, and She can obviously direct at it.²⁸

The habitation of God and the Mediatrix of the Word

The mediation of Mary derives from Her unique relations with the Word of God – Jesus Christ, which became the body. She is a faithful listener, a handmaid, and the Mother of Word. *She feels like being herself at home* in the Divine Word, She speaks and She thinks accordingly with the Divine Word, which becomes Her own word in a natural way. Her word which is shaped by the Word of God, originates from the Divine Word too. Then it directly leads to an assumption, that also Mary's thoughts and will remain in a harmony and a union with the thoughts and the will of God – She herself being pervaded by the Word of God, may become the Mother of the Incarnated Word.²⁹ Therefore, „a specific character of Mary's mediation consists in a maternal mediation, which is directed to a continuous bearing of Christ in the world. (...) Life does not result from acting, but from being born, thereby it requires labor pains. (...) Maternity, which continuously causes bearing Christ, relies on listening, observing and practicing the word of Jesus". Mary is „a role model of a hearer to the word, which She carries in herself, She observes and brings to a maturity”.³⁰

The Word of God is the Word of truth. Further to its acceptance by Mary, wherein She gave Him all Her life, the Word finds in Mary its everlasting habitation in the world. The Pope Benedict directly relates a faithful and confident attitude

²⁸ Ibid, p. 115-117.

²⁹ Cf Benedict XVI, *Dei Verbum*, No. 28.

³⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła, op.cit.*, p. 72.

of Mary to the Word, to an attitude of Abraham. He acknowledges a continuity of path in faith and confidence there, in a power of the Word: „the same way a great Patriarch became the father of believers, as answering a call from God to leave his land and provisions, he took a journey to an unknown land, being owned in the God’s promise only; Mary with a full confidence entrusted with the Word, that was announced Her by the messenger of God, and She became the role model and the mother of all believers”.³¹ For the Pope, the connection of Mary with the Word becomes a source of Her joy because the Word originates from a grace, which brings a joy. This joy derives from a unity with God, and a possession of a vital tie with Him. By acting with the power of the Holy Spirit, God entirely forms a life of Mary. “She completely lives a relation, and in a relation with the Lord. She accepts a status of a listener and She carefully recognizes signs of God on the path of His people. A history of faith and hope in God’s promises, is the essence of Her life, and She is involved in it. She is freely exposed to the Word and to the God’s Will in an obedience of faith”.³² God enters into a history of people, through the Word being accepted by Mary, and He lives among them in the womb of the Daughter of Zion. In a dialogue with Mary, who is identified with the nuptials people of God, God makes His promise to be fulfilled, thus an ultimate anticipation of people for the coming of God becomes accomplished in Her.

Mary is not the one, who bears the Word in Herself, but at the same time She makes the Word present in the world. Firstly, by allowing Him to grow up in Her, and secondly to shape and form Her. Mary deepens Her faith throughout all Her life, the faith which allowed Her to accept the word during the Annouintiation, and which She still renews by accepting a priority of the truth of God, the Father of Jesus. For that reason, She continuously “leaves the Son, whom She delivered, to be free, so He can accomplish His mission” until the mystery of cross.³³

Following a path of an acceptance and bearing the Word by Mary throughout Her life, Benedict XI indicates the mediatory role of Mary in accepting and bearing the Word in life of those, for whom, thanks to Mary, the Word took a residence in the world. This is the ay of a continuous process, that becomes accomplished in an internal life of faith, wherein Mary, as the Mother of all believers, plays a crucial role of a guide and a teacher. The Popes shows an attitude of Mary that She has

31 Benedict XVI, *Milcząca siła, która zwyciężyła hulaśliwe moce*, A general audience of December 19th, 2012, „L’Osservatore Romano” 2(2013), p. 43; cf Francisco, *Wyjście, fundamentalne doświadczenie powołania*, The Papal message for the International Day of Prayers for Vocations, Vatican, March 29th, 2015, <http://papiez.wiara.pl/doc/2449691.Franciszek-Wierzyc-to-porzucic-samego-siebie> 2015 (access:12.05.2015).

32 Benedict XVI, *Milcząca siła*, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

33 Ibid.

in all the events happening to Her, starting from the Annuntiation,. She listens to the words of Angel with an anxiety, and She is touched by the closeness of God Himself in these words. This is not however the anxiety, that can be identified with a fear of man, who is anxious about God's demands from him. „Mary wonders and questions Herself about a meaning of this salutation (cf Luke 1, 29). The Greek word, used in the Gospel to determine this *wondering* – *dielogizeto*, relates to roots of the word *a dialogue*. It means that Mary enters into a direct dialogue with the Word of God, which was announced to Her. She does not treat it superficially, but She stops and allows the word to penetrate into Her mind and heart. She wants to pretty understand what does God need from Her, and what is the sense of the Angel's message”.³⁴ Similarly with the bearing of the Word of God in Bethlehem, what Luke Evangelist described in a following way: when only looking at an adoration of shepherds to a newly born Son “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2, 19). Pursuing the Pope Benedict, we may say the record of Luke Evangelist characterizes and reflects well an attitude of Mary's whole life towards a role of the Word, which becomes personified by God in Her life, and through Her life also in the world. Also for us the path, which Mary followed in a relation to the Word, becomes the path of entering into a relation with the Word, and Mary Herself helps us efficiently to open for this relation: Mary “*kept together and jointly considered in her heart* all the things that were happening in Her life. She retains and assembles each single element, each single world, each single fact as a whole, and She acknowledges all of them to be the Will of God. Mary does not stop over the first external attempt of understanding of what is going on in Her life, but She looks deeply and allows these events to raise Her questions. She considers, She deliberates, She recognizes and She gets the understanding that may be provided only by the faith. This is just a deep humility of Her obedient faith, accepting all Divine actions – nevertheless She does not understand them, that results in opening Her mind and heart by God”.³⁵ This attitude of Mary is manifested within a whole public life of Her Son, whom She follows unto the cross – She listens carefully to His words, and She accepts the Divine plan with a full readiness, until it becomes fulfilled in His earthly assignment. An inner approach of listening and penetrating the history of salvation, helps Mary to be aware of Her own history, and to recognize the activity of God. This is an ability to stay focused, to consider and to recognize events in a silence of Her own heart, they allows Mary to develop a skill

³⁴ Ibid, p. 43.

³⁵ Ibid.

of the inner acceptance of the God's Will.³⁶ Not only this inner attitude seems to be a prerequisite in a life of the Handmaid of the Word, but also in life of the followers of Jesus. In the Cenacle prior to the Pentecost, before the door becomes opened and the Apostles start to proclaim Christ to all the nations, She watches in a prayer and a seriousness with them. "Mary shares there with them the most cherished thing: a memory about Christ in a prayer; She shares the mission of Christ, which is keeping a memory and a presence of Christ". "She already got Him [the Trinity] to bear the Incarnated Word, She awaits this gift together with the whole Church, so Christ becomes formed in a heart of each believer (cf Ga 4, 19). So, when there is no Church without the Pentecost, there is no Pentecost without the Mother of Jesus, because She lived in an exceptional way with that, what is the experience of the Church thanks to the Holy Spirit. (...) Wherever, the Incarnation of Christ in a womb of the Virgin is preached, there is the Church of Christ; and wherever the Apostles preach, who are the brothers of the Lord, the Evangelic is heard there (Sermo 30, 1:SC 164, 135)".³⁷

Therefore, Mary is also a teacher of a communautaire prayer and a teacher of a praying community. At the same time, She is the one who prays for the community and shows a coverage of a prayer, wherein each of the community's member solicits unanimously, persistently and faithfully God, with one soul, one heart and rising above his own needs and intentions.

Mary stands in front of disciples of Jesus as a mediatrix of the role model. She is eager to answer a revealing Will of God with a full readiness, in a persistent and mature prayer, by a pledging choice, by a resignation and an offering, and in any critical moment of the history of Salvation. Mary indicates that „ only due to a permanent tie, a deep and full love to her Son, we can leave *our house*, we can leave ourselves courageously to reach the ends of the earth, and to proclaim Jesus, the Lord, The Redeemer of the world".³⁸

We may recognize right now an intercession in Her mediation, which is extended onto the whole Church and to all believers after Her Assumption. The Church enshrines Mary as the Queen of heaven and earth, since the way Her reigning Son serves a man, She serves Her Son, and the Will of God in Himself. She serves a man as a Queen of love, "experiencing the gift of Herself for God, to enter into the plan of human's Salvation". She effuses Her maternal care over the children who are approaching Her "to thank Her, or to plead Her for a maternal care

36 Cf Id, *Dei Verbum*, No. 27.

37 Id, *Bez Maryi nie ma Kościoła*, A general audience of March 14th, 2012 r., „L'Osservatore Romano" 5(2012), p. 54-55.

38 Idem, p. 55.

and Her heavenly help, maybe after losing a way, when being oppressed with pain or torments, when suffering from life difficulties. We approach Mary in a prosperity and in a darkness of our life, we entrust ourselves Her eternal mediation, so that She obtains graces and a mercy that we need in our pilgrimage on the world from Her Son. With the mediation of the Virgin Mary, we confidently approach that One, who rules the world and holds a fate of the universe. For centuries, She has been summoned as the Queen of Heaven. After a prayer of the Holy Rosary, She is called eight times in the Litany of Loreto as of the Queen of Angels, Queen of Patriarchs, Queen of Prophets, Queen of Apostles, Queen of Martyrs, Queen of Confessors, Queen of Virgins, Queen of all Saints and families. A rhythm of these ancient callings and routine prayers, such as for instance *Salve Regina*, helps us to understand that the Blessed Virgin as our Mother, standing by the side of Her Son in the glory of heavens, She is always with us, She accompanies us each single day of our life. The title of “Queen” is then a title of trust, joy and love. We are conscious that She, the one who partially owns a fate of the world in Her hands, She is good, She loves us and She helps us in all our difficulties”.³⁹

The Mediatrix of God’s Benediction and the Apostle of the hope of salvation

By becoming the Mother of the Word of God, Mary becomes the Mediatrix of God’s benediction to the world, too. Her answer to the Word of God, and His Will, as well as a fruit of his beatitude is the fertility of Her womb. By accepting the Word, She becomes blessed as the first one, and at the same time, She is the one, who brings God’s benediction to the world and a human race. She is the first who receives a blessing, She adopts it and by the adoption, She gives it over and shares with others. She carries Jesus and shows Him to others, and Jesus is the mercy and peace; He is a sum and a synthesis of all the blessings.⁴⁰ A mystery of a union between Her Divine and an ecclesial maternity becomes visible in Mary’s life since the Assumption, when She entered into a dialogue with the Word of God, and until the mystery of cross, where She is given back as a mother to the disciple. This is upon this union, that Mary became not only “the bearer” of Jesus, but She entered into a mystery of a new vocation, a new maternity. By adopting all of us to

39 Id, *Królowa, która jest służebnicą*, a sermon from a general audience of August 22nd, 2012 in Castel Gandolfo, „L’Osservatore Romano” 9-10(2012), p. 43-44.

40 Id, *Wychowanie jest integralną częścią ewangelizacji*, A homily of the Holy Mass on the Ceremony of Mary, Mother of God, Vatican Basilic, January 1st, 2012, „L’Osservatore Romano” 2(2012), p. 20.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS A FULL OF GRACE MEDIATRIX...



Her bosom,⁴¹ She became “the image of the Church, that carries hope to the world in its womb”.⁴²

Ratzinger indicates, it is a unique relation of Mary with the Word of God, who became a form of life in Her,⁴³ that helps us in understanding that “the Word of God has not remained alone, but He took something else into His inwardness – the earth. In the *earth* of Mother, the Word of God became the man and He could return to God as the new one and combined with the earth of the whole human race”.⁴⁴ For that reason, a mystery of Church grows out of Mary and with Her, as the Church lives the mystery of maternity,⁴⁵ and becomes in the world a habitation of God, who brings a gift of the Salvation to the world.⁴⁶ Mary then both helps us in better understanding what is the community of the Church, and we may learn from Her also a great mystery of Christ, by Whom God, the Savior of man, became close to us.⁴⁷ Simultaneously, this is Mary, often named as the Comforter or the Cause of joy, who sends us always back to a source of joy and comfort, that is the salvific gift of Her Son. With Her this gift is available to us since “wherever Mary is, there is a complex truth about God, Christ and man, there is an original image of a total devotion and imitation of Christ, there is a Whit breath of the Holy Spirit, there is a beginning and a real recovery”.⁴⁸ Thus, the intermediary role of Mary resolves in a function of bearing in the world, within all centuries, the word of truth – Jesus Christ, the hope of Salvation; and in caring for its presence in us. Thanks to Her maternal goodness, She teaches each of us separately, and all of us together, how to know, love and live with the truth of Christ.⁴⁹ She intermediates in giving us the Word of God, as She sends a message of God – the message addressed to all of us – that is Jesus, and nothing else than Him. She speaks through the Word of God, the Word that became a body in Her. She gives us the one, who is the whole life for Her.⁵⁰

41 Id, *Maryja Matką Chrystusa, Kościoła i każdego człowieka*, The Holy Mass in the Sanctuary Maryem Ana Evi, Efez – November 29th, 2006, „L'Osservatore Romano” 2(2007), p. 22-23.

42 Id, The Encyclical *Spe salvi*, No. 50.

43 Cf Id, *Dei Verbum*, No.34.

44 J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja, op.cit.*, p. 57.

45 Ibid, p. 21-22; T. Rowland, *Wiara Ratzingera. Teologia Benedykta XVI*, transl. A. Gomola, Kraków 2010, p. 147.

46 J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja, op. cit.*, p. 57.

47 *Bóg i świat. Wiara i życie w dzisiejszych czasach* [convers. P. Seewald]. Transl. G. Sowiński. Kraków 2001, p. 327.

48 *Benedykt XVI do osób konsekrowanych*, editor M. Saj, Kraków 2009, p. 168.

49 Cf J. Szymik, *Tam otwiera się niebo, op.cit.*, p. 51.

50 Benedict XVI, *Przesłanie ufności dla każdego człowieka*, Speech at the Spanish Square on December 8th, „L'Osservatore Romano” 2(2011), p. 32.

As the Mediatrix of the Word, Mary indicates a universal calling for a holiness, that becomes accomplished through an openness to the might of the Holy Spirit, in whom we may reach our final destination. In that sense, She intermediates in a gift of the hope of Salvation, because She delivers a message of trust in the might of the Word of God to us. It is not a message made out of the words, but this is a message made out of Her own history, in which and by which She speaks to everyone: “it is also your own destiny, a destination of all the people: to be blessed as our Father is, to be undefiled as our Brother, Jesus Christ, to be beloved children, all fosters to create one big family, without any borders of a nationality, a color of skin, a language – since there is one God only, the Father of each human nature”.⁵¹

The Pope directly names Mary the Light, that lights a truth of Christ, and that allow us - by opening the door of our world to God - to have a sense in a direction of our life’s path.⁵² Likewise a cherishing look of mother, filled with a care of her child’s life, the look of Mary becomes the look of love of God Himself. “She behaves Herself like our *Comforter* (...). Even if everyone speaks ill of us, She – the Mother, She will speak well because Her Immaculate Heart is tuned with the Divine Mercy (...). Although we are such different to Jesus, She identifies a similarity with her Son in each of us! Who might however better than Her know a might of the Divine mercy”.⁵³ The Pope underlines that whoever addresses Mary for Her intercession, he may be surely confident, that Jesus listens to His Mother’s requests. He might be confident that Mary is our Mother too, and She understands our needs. Such a Marian devotion derives straightly from discovering of a mystery of the union and the tie between Jesus and Mary, and between Her Immaculate Heart, totally directed to the loving heart of Her Son in an unconditional union.⁵⁴ This unification in the unconditional love of Jesus and Mary makes clearly visible that „in the heart of Mary there is a place for love, Her Divine Son wants to give to the world”, and also that „Mary Herself cooperates for the good in everything and [God] does not stop causing that the good spreads further in the world through Her. Jesus gave his Mother, Mary to people as their Mother, from the Cross, a throne of the grace and the Salvation. At the moment of giving Himself for the human nature, Jesus made Mary like the Mediatrix of a source of grace, that comes from the Cross. Underneath the Cross, Mary becomes a partner and a patroness of people in their

51 Ibid.

52 Id, *Spe salvi*, No. 49.

53 Id, *Przesłanie ufności*, op.cit., p.32.

54 Cf. J. Szymik, *Tam otwiera się niebo*, op.cit., p.53-57.

way of life.⁵⁵ This way, Mary – the Star of hope⁵⁶ – allows man to find out a path of the Redemption, and to find himself in his relation to God on this path. When looking into the heart of Mary, and along with Her into the heart of the Redeemer, man also turns himself to his fellows, because always our hope is the hope for the others, too.⁵⁷ An experience of mutual exchange of love helps to find ourselves.

Accompanying us on the path of Salvation, not only Mary helps us to discover a depth of a Christian vocation, but She also teaches a man with a maternal softness, how to open his life for the love of God – the love which is abounding with mercy and which leads us the path of hope. Mary indicates that “*wherever there is God, there is a future*. Wherever, we allow the love of God to fully affect our life, there the Heaven opens. There is possible to shape our presence in such a way, that it refers more and more to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. The small things of our daily life become important, and big problems find their solutions there”.⁵⁸

In place of a conclusion

An essence of the Mariological issue of the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the hope of salvation, in the preaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, is given well by a reflection of St. Syrian Efram: „a death entered into the world through an ear of Eve (cf The Book of Genesis 3, 1-6), a life entered into the world through an ear of Mary, instead”.⁵⁹ In the life of Mary everything derives from listening and being engrossed in the Word of God. There is the source of Mary’s fertility, as being pregnant She goes out to others, and by overcoming “mountains of history” She bring a news of hope.⁶⁰ By referring to the Patristic theology, the Pope indicates that a Divine word of hope, that is continuously born and granted “entered into Her [Mary] through an ear, and the deepest nature of Her body was sanctified”. Jesus Christ – the eternal Word, the Sun of hope, the one who came out of Mary’s womb, He entered there firstly by the ears of the Virgin.⁶¹

55 Benedict XVI, *Co chce nam powiedziec Maryja?*, Marian vespers prior to „Wallfahrtskapelle, Eischfeld – September 23rd, 2011., „L’Osservatore Romano” 12(2012), p. 25.

56 Id, *Spe salvi*, No, 49-50.

57 Ibid, No.48.

58 Id, *Co chce nam powiedziec Maryja?*, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

59 St. Ephrem, *Diatessaron*, 4,15.22.

60 Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*, No. 50.

61 J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosla*, *op.cit.*, p. 72; M. G. Masciarelli, *Znak*, *op.cit.*, p. 121.

Most of all, Ratzinger acknowledges Mary as the Mother. The Pope refers to Her mediation always in the context of Her motherhood, which is tied with an activity of bearing Jesus in the world. Further, He underlines that “in the Salvific occurrence, there is always a dimension of woman present, who finds in Mary her everlasting center”.⁶² A parental nature of Mary’s mediation exists in Her life since the very beginning – once She conceived the Word. The first act of bearing becomes fulfilled there by an internal act of obedience of Mary’s will, and Her response to the invitation of God. Then, a maternal nature of Mary’s mediation should be obviously sought in a theological dimension of Her person, since God makes Her capable in cooperating in the work of Salvation, and not only through historically verified facts, or a single biological event.⁶³ Mary is the Mother within every fiber of Her belief. She is capable to bear Jesus at any time, what was evidently concretized in the mystery of the Pentacost.⁶⁴

Further, the maternity allows for better defining a maternal relation of Mary with Jesus, Her Son. This relation is extended either onto Her life, and life of those, for whom She was established as their Mother by Jesus. Mary combines all the events happening in Her life, beginning from the Incarnation until the Pentecost, in a very exceptional way. She becomes bridge connecting a mystery of an inseparable unity of Jesus Christ, the sent Messiah and the one who gives Salvation to the world. Thus, relations of Mary and Jesus are neither external nor subsidiary. This is a circulation of grace and love between Jesus and Mary, which connects them and joins Mary with each single event of the mystery of Christ.⁶⁵ For that we have an access to the full mystery of Christ, this is just in Mary, with Her and through Her.

Not only Ratzinger indicates a literal maternity of Mary, but also Her spiritual maternity. At the same time, Her mediation remains of the same spiritual nature, as it comes down to being the Mother entirely, and for the whole Church, where the whole mystery of Christ is present. The Church both lives in and lives with this mystery. In this union Mary, in all dimensions and intrinsically, is the Mother, because She is the teacher of a maternity for the Church.⁶⁶ That kind of maternity comes down to a continuous bearing of Christ anew by hearing, by preserving,

62 J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła*, *op.cit.*, p.72; cf J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja*, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

63 „In faith, a divine filiation is not a biological fact, but the ontological one. It is not a single occurrence in a history, but in the eternity of God. God is always the Father, the Son and the Spirit; conception of Jesus does not mean that new God is created – the Son, it only means that God as the Son in Jesus-man assumes a human nature himself, so He becomes the man himself – cf J. Ratzinger, *Wstęp do chrześcijaństwa*, transl. Z. Włodkova, Kraków 1970, p. 223n.

64 Cf. J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Balthasar, *Maryja*, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

65 G. Masciarelli, *Znak*, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AS A FULL OF GRACE MEDIATRIX...

and fulfilling His words. This is what happens in Mary's life, when She conceives Jesus not in a physical way only, but also in faith since She is the Listening. A faith derives from listening, and She gave birth to Christ by the faith.⁶⁷

The incident beneath the Cross becomes pivotal in understanding a mediatory role of Mary in the history of Salvation, and a history of life and faith of each single human nature. This is Jesus – Her Son, who gives Mary – His Mother to a disciple, and by this symbolic meaning of a disciple, Jesus gives Mary to all the people. An exceptional and particular relation between Mary and each single disciple arises there, because the disciple adopts Her as his Mother *to all his things*.⁶⁸ It is characteristic that Mary is named as a *Woman* in the Gospel of St. John. As noticed by Ratzinger, this fact becomes even more important as it includes an initiative of Mary's exaltation as the woman - a symbol and a reality of a universal meaning. There is a peculiar interpretation of the history by a sign of woman, who fights against the enemy might as the mother, with a strength and implications of her motherhood. She is the new Eve in whom the Savior found His habitation in the world. She is the mother who rushes from heaven to help us, and She is the sign of hope for everyone, who wants to conceive and grow a Divine life in himself.⁶⁹

67 J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. U. v. Batlhasar, *Maryja*, *op.cit.*, p. 48; J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła*, *op.cit.*, p.72; G. Masciarelli, *Znak*, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

68 Cf R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, b.3, Freiburg 1986; N.M. Flanagan, *Mary in the Theology of John's Gospel*, *Mary* 40 (1978), p. 110-120; M. Bednarz, *Pisma Św. Jana*, Tarnów 1997, p. 88n.

69 J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła*, *op.cit.*, p.73-74; cf. John Paul II, The Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, No. 24, 47.

NAJŚWIĘTSZA MARYJA PANNA JAKO PEŁNA ŁASKI POŚREDNICZKA NADZIEI ZBAWIENIA

W NAUCZANIU JOSEPHA RATZINGERA - BENEDYKTA XVI

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy pośrednictwa Maryi w nauczaniu Josepha Ratzingera – Benedykta XVI, które ma znaczenie nie tylko dla egzystencji ludzkiej, ale także dla teologii i duchowości chrześcijańskiej. Maryja, jako Matka Syna Bożego, sama będąc pełna łaski, staje się dla człowieka przewodniczką na drodze wiary i oknem nadziei, przez które człowiek odnajduje drogę do Boga we własnej historii życia i we własnym doświadczeniu, a Bóg w jej macierzyńskim pośrednictwie, pokonuje obojętność człowieka, otwierając dla niego obfitość łaski. Pośrednictwa Maryi nie można jednak rozumieć absolutnie. Jest ono zawsze uczestnictwem w jedynym pośrednictwie Jej Syna.

Maryja nie skupia uwagi na sobie, lecz odsyła poza siebie, tam gdzie moc łaski jest w stanie naprawdę osiągnąć potrzeb człowieka. Żyje Ona w pełni relacją i w relacji z Chrystusem, dlatego Jej macierzyńskie pośrednictwo jest ukierunkowane na ciągle rodzenie Chrystusa w świecie. Jest Ona nie tylko tą, która rodzi Słowo w sobie, ale jednocześnie uobecnia je w świecie, pozwalając, aby ono po pierwsze dojrzało w Niej, a po drugie kształtowało Ją. Dlatego Benedykt XVI niejako wskazuje na Jej pośredniczącą rolę w przyjęciu i rodzeniu Słowa w życiu wszystkich, dla których przez Nią, Słowo zamieszkało w świecie. Jest to droga ciągłego procesu, dokonującego się w wewnętrznym życiu wiary, w którym Maryja, jako matka wszystkich wierzących, ma do odegrania swoją znaczącą rolę jako przewodniczka i nauczycielka.

Pośrednicząca rola Maryi sprowadza się zatem do funkcji rodzenia w świecie wszystkich wieków słowa prawdy – Jezusa Chrystusa, nadziei zbawienia; i do troski o jej obecność w nas. Maryja, dzięki swej matczynej dobroci, uczy każdego z osobna i wszystkich razem, poznawać, kochać i żyć prawdą Chrystusa. Pośredniczy w przekazywaniu nam Słowa Bożego, gdyż daje nam orędzie Boga skierowane do każdego z nas, którym jest nie co innego, jak Jezus. Mówi przez Słowo Boże, które w Niej stało się ciałem. Daje nam tego, który jest całym Jej życiem.