

The Biblical Roots of Marian Consecration

THE BIBLICAL
ROOTS OF MARIAN
CONSECRATION

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart
in Light of Scripture

Shane Kapler

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“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, and no scales can measure his excellence” (Sirach 6:14–16).

For Michael Vento, a true friend and spiritual mentor—but even more, a true brother to Christ Jesus and son of Mary.

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Introduction

“You have seen Hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.”

—The Virgin Mary at Fatima, 1917

Those were the words reported by three Portuguese children in the midst of World War I. Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, Lucia dos Santos and her small cousins, Francisco and Lucia Marto, claimed to have received six apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹ To bring an end to the war, Mary requested that people return to God, pray the Rosary daily, and perform acts of penance. She promised the children:

If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war is going to end; but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI. When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, you know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and

¹ Lucia was ten years old, and her cousins were eight and seven.

of the Holy Father. To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church.² The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted the world.³

Mary told the children other things as well: On October 13, 1917, a miracle would occur “for all to see and believe.”⁴ Jacinta and Francisco would also “soon” join her in heaven.⁵

All occurred exactly as prophesied. On October 13, a crowd of seventy thousand witnessed the promised sign: A rainstorm gave way to the sun “dancing” in the sky. It then appeared to plunge toward the terrified crowd, miraculously drying the drenched onlookers and ground before returning to its place in the sky.⁶ By February 1920, both Francisco and

² Due to their age and remedial education, the children had no idea that “Russia” was a country or that it was undergoing a revolution at that time. In their naivete, they believed “Russia” to be an individual in need of conversion.

³ Kondor, *Fatima*, 178–79.

⁴ Kondor, 178.

⁵ Kondor, 177.

⁶ These events were reported in the Portuguese newspapers *O Dia* and *O Seculo*: see English translations in Foley, *Marian Apparitions*, 246–8. The original *O Seculo* article can be accessed at: <https://www.scribd>

Jacinta had succumbed to the Spanish Flu. Ambrogio Ratti was elected pope on February 2, 1922, and took the name Pius XI. On the night of January 25, 1938, the “unknown light” was seen over much of Europe; the *New York Times* described it as an “aurora,” and London’s *Daily Telegraph* as a “crimson glow which deepened to violet.”⁷ Less than two months later, Hitler invaded Austria and annexed Czechoslovakia’s *Sudetenland*—the first of the aggressive acts that plunged the world into World War II. The scourge of Communist Russia and its effect upon the rest of the twentieth century is well known, as is Pope John Paul II’s consecration of Russia and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on March 25, 1984, and the subsequent collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

At this point, you might be asking yourself what the story of Fatima, a “private revelation,” has to do with the title of this book, which focuses on the “public revelation” found in Scripture. Before unpacking the biblical roots of devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, let me explain my reasoning for doing so.

Thirty-five years ago, the thought of writing a book affirming *any* Marian belief was unthinkable to me. In my early teen years, I became passionate about following Christ. I attended a Catholic school but found the catechesis to be fairly weak, so I started studying the Bible while reading and listening to non-Catholic preachers and teachers (predominantly from non-denominational, fundamentalist congregations). Sadly,

.com/doc/30722706/The-Miracle-of-Fatima-El-Milagro-de-Fatima-O-Milagro-De-Fatima#download.

⁷ Foley, *Marian Apparitions*, 307.

I absorbed the opinion that Catholic beliefs about the Virgin Mary were in direct contradiction to Scripture.

In less than a year, however, the Lord had introduced me to Catholics who were on fire with the Holy Spirit, loved Scripture, and were also . . . incredibly devoted to the Blessed Mother. “How is that possible?” I wondered. They shared their understanding of the communion of saints with me and personal stories of how Mary had acted as a powerful “prayer partner.” The latter was a concept with which any Christian could be at ease. As I started to grapple with Matthew’s and Luke’s infancy narratives, John’s account of the Crucifixion, and the book of Revelation, I began to see Mary in a new scriptural light. I also began discovering the “why” of Catholic Marian beliefs and how, while some may not be found on a surface reading of Scripture, the Church certainly did not teach anything that *contradicted* the Bible.

I also discovered that the Church did not require me to believe every pious opinion about the Blessed Mother either. In fact, to be a Catholic in good standing, the Church only required that I give my assent to *public revelation*, meaning what Jesus entrusted to the apostles (and was handed down in Scripture and Sacred Tradition). Nothing new could ever be added to this deposit from the outside. Rather, as the centuries pass, the Holy Spirit assists the Church to mine the deposit for ever-deeper insights and articulate the Faith with greater precision.⁸ Mary’s immaculate conception and assumption were examples of such development.

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 66–7. I would argue that this progress in understanding, or what has become known as the “development of doctrine,” is something implicitly held by even the most hardline

But what continued to trouble me about *private* revelations such as Fatima was that even if the Church did not require my assent, she had still investigated Fatima and declared that there was nothing within the message that was incompatible with the *public revelation*. Further, the Church stated that, at least humanly speaking, given the fulfilled prophecies and abundant witnesses to the events, the messages reported by the young seers were worthy of belief. The last several popes have also drawn the world's eyes to Fatima as an urgent reiteration of *the Gospel* for our time. They have offered numerous positive statements, made pilgrimages to the shrine, established a yearly liturgical feast in honor of Our Lady of Fatima, and released the "third secret" entrusted by Mary to the visionaries. The popes have also, in response to Mary's direct request at Fatima, consecrated the world to her Immaculate Heart, as recently as March 25, 2022. Now, in what sense does the call for individuals and nations to be devoted and consecrated to Mary's heart reiterate the call to

of fundamentalists. Take, for example, the issue of slavery. Neither Jesus nor the apostles made any move to overturn the deeply ingrained practice. (The apostle Paul even counseled slaves to be obedient to their masters [Eph 6:5; Col 3:22].) Slavery's absolute incompatibility with Christianity only emerged after centuries of reflection upon the deposit of faith: Jesus commanded the apostles to "Love your neighbor as yourself," qualifying that all human beings are neighbors to one another (Lk 10:25–37). Paul not only wrote to Philemon to ask pardon for a runaway slave but also challenged Philemon to receive him back as a *brother in Christ* (v. 16). Paul also wrote to the Galatians of how, in Christ, there was no distinction between Jew and Greek, man or woman, slave or free (Gal 3:28); all possess equal dignity before God. These principles were always implicit within the Gospel—just not taken to their logical end until much later, at which point the Church could articulate the absolute incompatibility of slavery with Christian faith.

live the Gospel? It took me several years to answer that question, and this book is one of the fruits of that happy struggle.

Why Devotion to Mary?

Christ Jesus is the sole mediator between God and man, the only way of attaining union with the Father (1 Tm 2:5; Jn 14:6). The Catholic Church has never proposed devotion to Mary as an end in itself. Saint Louis de Montfort (d. 1716), one of the Church's greatest advocates of such devotion, was adamant about Mary's position in relation to God: "I avow, with all the Church, that Mary, being a mere creature that has come from the hands of the Most High, is in comparison with His Infinite Majesty less than an atom, or rather, she is nothing at all, because only He is 'He who is' (Ex 3:14); consequently the grand Lord, always independent and sufficient to Himself, never had, and has not now, any absolute need of the holy Virgin for the accomplishment of His will and for the manifestation of His glory. He has but to will in order to do everything."⁹ And yet, as de Montfort further declares, we recognize how the Lord acted with absolute freedom—as He did when making use of Abraham or David—when *He chose* to give His Son to the world "*only through Mary*."¹⁰ It is a historical fact and one of the most basic datum of Scripture.

When we immerse ourselves in the scriptural texts, however, we see a great deal more. Not only is Mary the "mother of my Lord" (Lk 1:43)—as if that was not enough—but she

⁹ de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*, no. 14.

¹⁰ de Montfort, 16.

is also the Ark of the New Covenant (Lk 1:35, 39–43; 2 Sm 6:9–14), the personification of Daughter Zion (Lk 1:28; Zep 3:14–17), the New Eve (Jn 19:26–27; Gn 3:15; Rv 12:1–6), the ideal disciple and intercessor (Lk 1:38, 45; Jn 2:1–11), and a sharer in Christ’s passion (Lk 2:35) and glorification (Rv 11:19–12:5). Whenever Scripture speaks of Mary, *it is always in relation to her Son*. All that Mary is, she is because of Jesus. *The same is true of us*.

In Mary, the Church sees her best self. Just as Mary’s whole life was centered upon Jesus and bringing Him to the world, so each of us is called to be a dwelling place of the Most High (Eph 2:22); live as members of a redeemed humanity (1 Pt 1:23); spiritually give birth to Christ (Mt 12:50); and participate in His life, death, and resurrection (Phil 3:10). If the apostle Paul could tell others to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor 11:1), then how much more so Mary? Like her, each of us is called to be sinless (Eph 5:27), glorified in body and soul (1 Cor 15:51–53), and to share Christ’s heavenly reign (Rv 3:21). In Mary we see the heights to which Christ wishes to raise us.

When the Church advocates “devotion” to Mary, it is directing our eyes to the masterwork of Christ’s grace. Every moment of Jesus’s life on earth was redemptive for mankind and spent *exactly* as the Father wished. It was the Father’s will that Jesus spent more than 90 percent of that time living in intimate union with Mary—nursing at her breasts, learning to walk, speaking His first words, praying, obeying, playing, studying and discussing Scripture, and learning a trade. To be “devoted” to Mary means to love her as the mother of Our Lord—to *come to love her as Jesus loves her*—and to

emulate her discipleship, *her love for Him*. Christ Jesus is the alpha and omega of Marian devotion. Marian Consecration has evolved throughout Church History, but its foundation is present in the earthly lives of Jesus and Mary.

Marian devotion, however, is far more than emulation. Mary is not “dead and gone” but someone alive and united to us in the Body of Christ (Jn 11:25; Mt 22:32; 1 Cor 12:26). Scripture encourages us to confidently draw near God’s throne in prayer (Heb 4:16), reminding us that whenever we do, we simultaneously draw near to all of our brothers and sisters around His throne: “You have come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering . . . and to the spirits *of just men [and women] made perfect*, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant” (Heb 12:22–23). The apostle John saw this same reality when he glimpsed heaven and saw the saints and angels offering our prayers, like incense, to God (Rv 5:8; 8:3–4). They do so through, with, and in Christ. Jesus “lives to make intercession for us” (Heb 7:25), so it only makes sense that those who have come to the fullness of His life in heaven do so as well. This is especially true of Mary, who loves us as members of her Son’s mystical Body. Jesus is always present to us; thus, the saints who form His mystical Body are as well. They “surround” us like a “great cloud of witnesses,” inspiring us to “lay aside every weight and . . . run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1).

Why a Devotion Focused upon the Heart?

When we today speak of the heart, it is in reference to either the organ at the center of the cardiovascular system or the center of our emotional lives. Scripture uses the term in a richer, more expansive way. “Heart” appears approximately one thousand times in the Old Testament (*leb/lebab* and *meeh* in Hebrew) and one hundred fifty times in the New (*kardia*, *kolia*, and *splancha* in Greek).¹¹ There it refers to the most vital center of a person’s life. It is where we think, ponder, and grow in skill, wisdom, and understanding.¹² The heart is the place of decision,¹³ as well as what convicts us of right and wrong.¹⁴ The heart is where faith and virtue (or vice) reside,¹⁵ the source of sincere prayer.¹⁶ It is the heart that *loves*.¹⁷ And finally, the heart is the place of God’s indwelling.¹⁸ In short, Scripture presents the heart as “the core of all volitional and emotional and intellectual activity”—the center of the *whole interior life*.¹⁹ And when we consider the effect our interior life has upon the beating of our cardiac muscle, it is easy to see why the organ became the symbol of the spiritual reality.

¹¹ Joachim Becker, “The Heart in the Language of the Bible” in Schefczyk, *Faith in Christ*, 24. The Scripture passages cited in the following footnotes were also brought to my attention by Becker, 24–27.

¹² Gn 6:5; Ex 36:2; Ps 53:1; Prv 23:26; Sir 21:26.

¹³ 1 Sm 14:7; 2 Sm 7:3; Lk 2:34–35.

¹⁴ 2 Sm 24:10; 1 Kgs 8:38.

¹⁵ Rom 10:10; Lk 6:45.

¹⁶ Lam 3:41; Jl 2:13.

¹⁷ Dt 6:5; Rom 5:5.

¹⁸ Gal 4:6; Eph 3:17.

¹⁹ O’Donnell, *Heart of the Redeemer*, 25.

The Old Testament speaks prophetically of the Messiah's heart. Psalm 40 captures Christ's prayer as He took flesh in Mary's womb: "Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body you have prepared for me. . . . *Thy law is within my heart*" (Heb 10:5–7; Ps 40:6–8). Psalm 22, which Jesus quoted from the Cross, foretold the piercing of His hands and feet, the soldiers gambling for His clothes, and the anguish of His heart, that "like wax, is melted within [his] breast" (Ps 22:14–18). Another Messianic Psalm describes both the vinegar offered to Christ at His crucifixion and His interior anguish, "Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. / I looked for pity, but there was none" (Ps 69:20; Mt 27:48). That heartbrokenness would give way to the ecstatic joy of the Resurrection; Psalm 16 continues, "*Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. / For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. / Thou dost show me the path of life. . . . In thy right hand are pleasures for evermore*" (Ps 16:9–11; Acts 2:26–28).²⁰ The resurrected Lord would bring *other hearts to life* through the celebration of His *todah*, or Eucharistic sacrifice (Ps 22:25–26).²¹

Once we grasp the biblical conception of the heart, we grasp how all of Jesus's words, actions, and prayer were the manifestations of His heart. Without surrendering anything of His divinity, God the Son truly became man—loving and suffering with a human heart. It is from His heart, opened

²⁰ O'Donnell, 30–32.

²¹ We will further explore the *todah* sacrifice and its connection to Christ's passion and the Eucharist in chapter 11.

physically and spiritually for us on the Cross, that we receive the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37–39; 19:34; 1 Jn 5:6–8).²²

Devotion to Christ's heart, a devotion focused upon *the passion*, the burning love, *that led to His passion*, deepened throughout the centuries. Saint Paul alludes to it in the following: "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, *who loved me and gave himself for me*" (Gal 2:20), and we see it made explicit in Justin Martyr's *Dialogues with Trypho* (c. AD 150): "We Christians are the true Israel which springs from the Christ, for *we are drawn out of his heart* as out of a rock. . . . He makes living water overflow into the hearts of those who through him *love the Father of the universe*, and he satiates those who wish to drink of the water of life."²³

²² John's Gospel is incredibly rich for a theology of Christ's heart: Jesus identified Himself as the new Temple (Jn 2:19, 21), making His heart its innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies. Note how John omits the synoptic Gospels' rending of the temple veil (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45). This is because, for John, the piercing of Christ's side *is* the rending of the veil; Christ's heart, the way to the Father, now stands open and the Spirit issues forth in the living waters of baptism: "If any one thirst, let him come to me, and let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water." Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:37–39); "One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water," from the pericardium, the sack surrounding His heart (Jn 19:34); "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree" (1 Jn 5:6–8).

²³ Quoted in O'Donnell, *Heart of the Redeemer*, 82–83. Note Justin's interweaving of Corinthians 10:4, John 7:37–38, and John 4:13.

Saints John Chrysostom (c. 395) and Augustine (c. 415) recognized the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist in the blood and water that flowed from Jesus's pierced side, and Albert the Great (d. 1280) enunciated, for a world no longer familiar with Roman execution, that the sacraments flowed from Jesus's pierced *heart*.

Because Christ's heart represents His entire interior life—His love, prayer, obedience, mercy, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, sorrow, joy, etc.—it is easy to understand why His heart was the subject of ongoing meditation and prayer among the saints. It is perfectly valid to speak of discipleship as a deepening union with Christ's sacred heart, the treasury of grace. It is an application of Our Lord's own words, "My heart is moved with pity. . . . Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves" (Mt 15:32; 11:28, NABRE). Our own hearts will be judged by our response to His invitation.

In addition to Jesus's heart, the Gospels mention the hearts of only two individuals: Judas (Jn 13:2) and Mary (Lk 2:19, 51). They are the most startling of contrasts: Judas betrayed his Master for worldly goods; whereas Mary, who pondered all of Jesus's words and actions in her heart, remained faithful even at the foot of the Cross. And the stark truth is that, in the end, *we will have the heart of either one or the other*.

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is a way to draw closer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Devotion to her heart becomes a "means" of salvation, since its goal is reproducing Mary's interior life, her complete orientation toward

her Son. (This is why the Church could acknowledge the apparitions at Fatima as being consistent with the Gospel.²⁴) When we gaze upon Mary's heart—pondering her faith in God's word and obedient surrender to His will, her all-consuming love for her Son, her prayer and contemplation, the suffering she bore, and the illumination she received—we see a model of perfection, mirroring Jesus's sacred heart. Hence we enlist Mary's intercession, calling out to God for the grace to be united to Jesus's heart as intimately as she was. We see in her the beatitude we seek from Christ: "Blessed are the pure [or immaculate] in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8).

What Does It Mean to Be "Consecrated" to the Heart of Mary?

Consecration (*qadash* in Hebrew, *hagiazó* in Greek) means to make holy, *to set someone or something apart for the service of God*. Under the Old Covenant, the tabernacle and temple, altars, priests, and offerings were consecrated.²⁵ Jesus, as the high priest and offering of the New Covenant, was consecrated to the Father, and His disciples are meant to share in His consecration (Jn 17:19). We are initially set apart for God in Baptism (Ti 3:5), but this consecration has to be deepened throughout life. Saint Paul reminds us that it must be continually ratified in our flesh and blood activities:

²⁴ Scripture is quite clear that we assist one another toward salvation: 2 Cor 5:20; Rom 10:14; 1 Tm 4:16; Jude 22–23; Staples, *Behold Your Mother*, 247–8.

²⁵ See Ex 13:2; 28:41; 29:37; 30:29; Dt 15:19; 1 Kgs 9:3.

“Present your bodies as a *living* sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1).

It was Mary’s consecration—the complete gift of her body and soul—that allowed God to become man and offer Himself upon the Cross for our salvation.²⁶ “I am the handmaid of the Lord,” exclaimed Mary, “let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). And at the foot of the Cross, she deepened both her consecration and her commitment to God’s will (Jn 19:34; Lk 2:35).

An object or person is consecrated only *to God*. When we speak of consecration to Mary, or her heart, we are speaking by way of analogy. For philosophers and theologians, analogy is what allows us to speak of God in human terms; we use a given word, recognizing that it expresses both a similarity and a difference. The term “consecration,” in its fullest, truest sense, refers to handing something over to the Godhead; it is used in an *accommodated sense* to refer to entrusting oneself to Mary.²⁷ We see the principle of analogy when Jesus told the disciples to call no man “father” or “teacher” (Mt 23:9–10). The Lord used hyperbole to stress how both terms find their ultimate meaning in reference to the Father and Son. This did not stop Jesus or the apostles from applying these same terms, in an accommodated sense, to other human beings.²⁸ Because of God’s grace, we can imperfectly experience God’s

²⁶ Consecration also takes place at Mass when, as with Mary’s self-offering, the Holy Spirit takes our gifts of bread and wine and transforms them into the Body and Blood of Christ, making present Jesus’s sacrifice upon the Cross.

²⁷ Calkins, *Totus Tuus*, 159–79.

²⁸ See Mt 28:20; Lk 16:24; 1 Cor 4:15; 12:28; Eph 4:11; Phlm 10; 1 Jn 2:13–14.

fatherhood through human fathers and Jesus's life-giving teaching through Christian teachers. Something similar can be said of Marian consecration. Men and women entrust, or "consecrate," themselves to Mary *for the purpose of consecrating themselves more perfectly to Christ Jesus*, and through Jesus, to the Father. God, not Mary, is our goal.

This idea of entrusting oneself to Mary was given to us by Jesus Himself. In John's crucifixion narrative, we read: "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his *own home* [Greek, *idia*]" (Jn 19:26–27). Jesus entrusted John's growth as an apostle, one of the foundation stones of His Church (Rv 21:14), to Mary's maternal care. The fourth Gospel is fond of using terms with multiple levels of meaning, and the Greek *idia* is much richer in meaning than simply one's "own home." Literally it is simply rendered as "own"; John "took her into his own," meaning that which was uniquely his, what was most personal. He took Mary into his home, but he also took her into his interior life.²⁹ When we read the fourth Gospel and marvel at how deeply John penetrated the mysteries of Jesus's life, we are undoubtedly benefiting from the decades he spent living, conversing about Jesus, reading Scripture, praying, and celebrating the Eucharist with Mary. Those years did not lead John to make an idol of her; rather, the Spirit used John's time with Mary to open his heart to

²⁹ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, 225–28.

understand and communicate Christ's life and teaching in an utterly unique and profound way.

When we Catholics speak of consecrating ourselves to Mary's immaculate heart, it is simply an abbreviated way of saying that we are deepening our consecration *to* Jesus, *in union with* the heart of Mary. We seek to love Jesus with the heart of His mother.³⁰ Saint Louis de Montfort explained, "All our perfection consists in being conformed, united, and consecrated to Jesus. . . . Now, Mary being the most conformed of all creatures to Jesus Christ, it follows that, of all devotions, that which most consecrates and conforms the soul to Our Lord is devotion to His holy Mother, and that the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more it is consecrated to Jesus."³¹ This devotion recognizes that everything Christ did on Calvary was ordered toward our salvation, including His entrustment of the apostle John to Mary. Throughout the centuries, the Holy Spirit has guided the Church to a more pronounced understanding of how John, always referred to as "the beloved disciple" in the fourth Gospel, represents all of Christ's disciples and of how Mary, now glorified in heaven, is given by Christ as a mother to each member of His *mystical Body*. We find this insight recorded in AD 226, in one of the first commentaries on John's Gospel.³²

³⁰ Hahn, *The Immaculate Conception*, in *A New Look at Our Lady*.

³¹ de Montfort, *True Devotion*, no. 120.

³² Origen, Christianity's first great biblical scholar, wrote, "[This Gospel's] profound meaning cannot be perceived except by him who rested his head on Jesus's breast [Jn 13:23] and *who received Mary to be his mother also*. He who wishes to be another John must become so in order to be pointed out by Jesus as another John, that is to say, another

The Plan of this Book

This book is divided into two parts. In part I, each chapter employs Scripture to focus upon (1) a different aspect of Jesus's Person, (2) who Mary is in relation to Jesus, and (3) how the *entire Church* participates in this reality. Each chapter concludes with a challenge to reflect upon a different aspect of Mary's heart (e.g., virginal, bridal) that the Holy Spirit also wishes to form in us.

In part II, the chapters explore the six elements that constitute Devotion to the Immaculate Heart: An act of consecration, love of the Eucharist, praying the Rosary daily, wearing the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, acts of reparation, and special celebrations on the first Saturday of the month. We will discover how each is rooted in the earthly lives of Jesus and Mary and how effectively they have been used to form Christ's image in saints such as Maximilian Kolbe, Mother Teresa, and Pope John Paul II.

One Final, Integral Element

This chapter began with Our Lady's appearance at Fatima and its "miracle of the sun." And yet, there is another important facet of Jesus's and Mary's lives to which the apparitions

Jesus. While Mary has no other [biological] son other than Jesus . . . nevertheless Jesus said to his Mother, 'Behold your son' [Jn 19:26], and not, 'Behold, this man is also your son.' In other words, he said to her, 'This man is Jesus, whom you bore.' Indeed, when someone is perfect, it is no longer he that lives, but Christ lives in him (cf. Gal 2:20); therefore when he speaks of him to Mary, he says, 'Behold your son, that is, Jesus Christ.'" *Commentary on John 1:6*; quoted in Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 80.

draw our attention. As the crowd witnessed the miracle of the sun, the three young visionaries beheld a far grander sight: “We beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands.”³³ Joseph’s role in Jesus’s and Mary’s lives was not only integral but irreplaceable.

When we first meet Joseph in the Gospels, we are told that he was a “just” man, *dikaïos* in Greek (Mt 1:19). It refers to an upright man, completely devoted to God’s law.³⁴ Joseph already possessed an intimacy with God, and yet, by taking Mary into his home, he was invited to draw nearer, “Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20). Joseph was the *first* to be consecrated to Jesus through union with Mary. (When the apostle John took Mary into his home, he became the second.³⁵) You and I are meant to join this esteemed company. That being the case, in part I of this book, as I conclude each chapter by reflecting upon some aspect of Mary’s heart, I will draw your attention to the way that grace was manifested in Joseph’s life, and in part II, we will see how the six elements that make up devotion to the Immaculate Heart were part of the apostle John’s living out of the Gospel.

Like Joseph and John, our goal is to love Jesus with all of our being. Specifically, we want to contemplate His words,

³³ Kondor, *Fatima in Lucia’s Own Words*, 183.

³⁴ Albright, *The Anchor Bible*, 8.

³⁵ My profound thanks to Michael Vento, who opened my eyes to the spiritual symmetry between Joseph and John.

carry Him to others, share His Cross, and intercede for His Church with the heart of His mother. This is the life that, in the words of Our Lady at Fatima, will save souls from hell.