

The White Virgin –
Toledo Cathedral
(Spain)



¹⁶ The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger.

¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

¹⁹ And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.


²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. ²¹ When eight days were completed for His circumcision, He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the Angel before He was conceived in the womb (Lk 2:16-21).

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD
— JANUARY 1 —

Predestined From All Eternity

Considering the greatest of the Marian privileges, we find wonders that provide a glimpse of the sublime grandeur of the Mother of God and ours.

I - A PRIVILEGE CONCEIVED FROM ALL TIME

he Church has chosen the first day of the civic calendar to celebrate the divine maternity of Our Lady, in order to begin the year by means of the glorious intercession of Mary. She pours out her blessings upon us in a special way on this Solemnity, whose coincidence with the Octave of Christmas shows us that the best way to praise the Child Jesus is to exalt the qualities of His Mother and ours, and that the best means to pay tribute to the Mother is to celebrate the birth of her Divine Son.

The Liturgy brings us short, yet very significant readings. While they are not proposed by God directly, but by commissions of experts who draw the most appropriate passages from Sacred Scripture for each celebration, the Holy Spirit aids them in this work so that, despite human shortcomings, it will be done in the most perfect manner.

Raised above all of creation

It is important to note that the presence of Our Lady in Sacred Scripture is very discreet. Possibly she herself asked the Evangelists to figure her person in a secondary plane, not only out of humility, but also to avoid the risk of divine nature being

attributed to her. Indeed, this actually happened in the earliest times of the Church, when she came to be worshipped as a goddess in some regions.¹

From a certain perspective, the emergence of this erroneous belief, which the Church knew how to rectify, is understandable. By reason of the divine maternity, Mary is so united to the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, that while possessing a strictly human nature, she participates, in a relative manner, in the highest level of creation: the hypostatic order, which, in an absolute manner, belongs only to Christ.² Thus, Our Lady is so far above all the other levels of creation—mineral, vegetable, animal, human, angelic and that of grace—that it is understandable that there would be a certain difficulty in considering her as merely a human creature favoured with unsurpassed graces.

A blessing from the Old Covenant which attains its plenitude in Mary

The first reading, taken from the Book of Numbers (6:22-27), brings the formula of the blessing transmitted by God Himself to the priests of Israel and used by the Holy Church until today. The Jewish people received it every day, in the morning and evening, when the priest left the sanctuary after having offered incense to God on the altar of perfumes.³ Contrary to other blessings, which emphasize the attainment of material benefits, this one is centred on the supernatural life. Even though natural gifts are conceded to us by God, they should be used with a view to His service. Of what benefit is it for someone to possess them

1) The deviations in devotion to Our Lady in the earliest times resulted even in worship ceremonies, as Alastruey comments: "According to the testimony of St. Epiphanius, the Collyridians, in Arabia, venerated the Virgin as a goddess and offered, with idolatrous rites, small rolls or cakes in her honour. This sect was composed almost exclusively of women, and the priestly offices were reserved for them. Among the Eastern Montanists, those called Marianists and Philomarianists adored Mary as a goddess" (ALASTRUEY, Gregorio. *Tratado de la Virgen Santísima*. (Ed.4). Madrid: BAC, 1956, p.841).

2) Cf. ROYO MARÍN, OP, Antonio. *La Virgen María*. Madrid: BAC, 1968, p.100-102.

3) Cf. COLUNGA, OP, Alberto; GARCÍA CORDERO, OP, Maximiliano. *Biblia Comentada, vol. I: Pentateuco*. Madrid: BAC, 1960, p.787-788.

in abundance, without God's blessing? He will certainly not produce fruits for eternity.

What particularly calls our attention in this Solemnity is the fact that all the blessings of the Old Covenant, granted by God to the people of Israel through Aaron, are concentrated in Our Lady and in her produced their maximum effects, with no trace of inadequacy.

A lofty privilege, conceived by God from all eternity

Mary's grandeur stands out with greater evidence in the passage of the Letter to the Galatians chosen for the second reading (cf. Gal 4:4-7), in which St. Paul highlights that Our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a woman: "When the time had come, God sent His Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to ransom those under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). If we slightly humanize the figure of God, as Scripture often does, we can imagine Him awaiting "the time" for the birth of the Mother of the Redeemer. However, in reality, He—for Whom everything is present—eternally conceived the



Hugo Grados

Both Mother and Son, inseparable, are the archetype of creation, the exemplary and final cause, in light of which all other men were predestined, for the glory of both, as a royal cortège for Them

Our Lady as Queen – St. Mary Major Parish,
Ronda (Spain)

work of creation and, at its centre, in just one act of His divine will and in the same and identical decree, predestined Jesus and Mary.⁴ Therefore, in the plan of the Incarnation of the Word was also contained the altogether unique gift of the divine maternity of Our Lady. Both Mother and Son, inseparable, are the archetype of creation, the exemplary and final cause, in light of which all other men were predestined, “for the glory of both, as a royal cortège for Them.”⁵

This helps us to understand why, among Mary’s innumerable privileges—of which the abundant array of titles accumulated by Catholic piety to praise her offers a vague notion—the principal one is that of being Mother of God. All others pale in comparison! God could have chosen a different means to assume our nature and to come among us, but He wanted to take Our Lady as Mother. It is impossible for a human person to enjoy a prerogative greater than this, and as St. Thomas Aquinas thus teaches,⁶ she finds herself in the category of perfect creatures, to which only two others belong: the Blessed Humanity of Jesus and the beatific vision. This privilege touches on the most profound essence of Mary and from it all the others flow.

Mary’s obedience opened the doors of grace

It is clear that she values this gift most highly, and no words could adequately express the lofty considerations she had in this regard, from the moment of her Fiat!, when she fully perceived what it meant for her to be the Mother of God. Notwithstanding, as the Latin saying goes, *Nemo summus fit repente* — nothing great happens suddenly. Far from being a sudden event which

4) Regarding the eternal predestination of the Redeemer and His most holy Mother, in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, Pope John Paul II teaches: “In the mystery of Christ she is present even ‘before the creation of the world,’ as the one whom the Father ‘has chosen’ as Mother of His Son in the Incarnation. And, what is more, together with the Father, the Son has chosen her, entrusting her eternally to the Spirit of holiness. In an entirely special and exceptional way Mary is united to Christ, and similarly she is eternally loved in this ‘beloved Son’” (JOHN PAUL II. *Redemptoris Mater*, n.8).

5) ROSCHINI, OSM, Gabriel. *Instruções Marianas*. São Paulo: Paulinas, 1960, p.25.

6) Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiæ*, I, q.25, a.6, ad 4.

caught Our Lady by surprise, the annunciation of St. Gabriel was the apex of a process, as St. Louis Grignion de Montfort attempts to describe: “During the first fourteen years of her life, the divine Mary grew so marvellously in the grace and wisdom of God and responded so faithfully to His love that the Angels and even God Himself were filled with rapturous admiration for her. Her deep humility, brought to the point of annihilation, delighted Him. Her altogether divine purity drew Him down to her. He found her lively faith and her ceaseless entreaties of love so irresistible that He was lovingly conquered by her appeals of love.”⁷ However, any description, no matter how detailed, can do nothing more than outline this incredibly rich reality.

With this act of obedience to the Divine Word, Mary brought about that the Son of God—eternal, begotten and not made—become Son of God in time, begotten and created as regards His human nature. St. Anselm sums up this mystery in a surprising expression: “One and the same will naturally be, at one and the same time, the common Son of God the Father and the Virgin.”⁸ Thus, Our Lady provided the Son with the possibility of addressing the Father from within human nature, and the joy of feeling Himself inferior to the Father, of offering Him everything that was within His reach, in complete obedience to Him, of which we find very beautiful examples in the Gospels. Among other instances, the prayer offered by Jesus during the agony in the Garden of Olives stands out: “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet, not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Mt 26:39). And the Holy Spirit, Who could offer nothing to the Father or the Son—for, as the three Divine Persons are substantially identical from all eternity, everything is common to Them—by the obedience of Mary, found the means of presenting Them many children and brethren: all those who by the grace of Baptism become, by adoption, sons of the Father and brothers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, “it is to the humanity of the Word and, consequently, to Mary,

7) ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *L'Amour de la Sagesse Éternelle*, n.107. In: *Œuvres Complètes*. Paris: Du Seuil, 1966, p.151.

8) ST. ANSELM. *De conceptu virginali et originali peccato*, c.XVIII. In: *Obras Completas*, vol.II. Madrid: BAC, 1953, p.47.



“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;
yet, not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Mt 26:39)

Prayer in the Garden – St. Mary’s Church, Cuenca (Spain)

that the Holy Spirit owes the fact of being the Author of the great work of the Church, which is essentially the continuation of the Incarnation, of giving birth to the members, just as she gave birth to the Head, and producing, by grace and for glory, the universal world of the elect.”⁹

An altar on par with an infinite offering

At the very moment of the Incarnation, Jesus offered Himself to the Father as an expiatory victim for our sins and began to intercede before God on our behalf. Thus, in addition to Redeemer, Christ is also the perfect Victim and sole Priest, Who “has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily,

9) NICOLAS, Auguste. *La Vierge Marie et le plan divin, vol.I.* (Ed.2). Paris: Auguste Vatou, 1856, p.376.

first for His own sins and then for those of the people; He did this once for all when He offered up Himself.” (Heb 7:27). His first act was of a priestly character.

What altar was on par with this offering, with which Our Lord made reparation for all the sins of humanity and which would later be consummated on Calvary? The maternal cloister of Our Lady, where He stayed for nine months, in the most intimate conviviality possible for a creature with the Creator. During this time, Mary’s blood formed the Sacred Body of the Child Jesus by the process of gestation, in which the maternal blood conducts nutrients to the child. In this way, the Blood offered by Jesus to the Father originated from the blood of Mary, which was divinized in becoming part of the Body of the Saviour. In virtue of this, the source of Our Lord’s priesthood is also the divine maternity of Our Lady.

II - DIVINE MATERNITY, CAUSE OF INFERNAL HATRED



In view of all the grandeur that this Marian privilege encompasses, it is not difficult to grasp the devil’s reason for detesting it with singular vehemence. Furthermore, one of the hypotheses raised to account for satan’s revolt in Heaven is precisely the rejection of the Incarnation of the Word in Mary. And history is witness to how he has spared no efforts, in all the impetus of his wickedness, to destroy the defenders of the divine maternity here on earth.

His fury reached an apex in the fifth century, when the heretic Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, began to propagate, based on the Arian heresy, that there are two persons in Christ, one divine and the other human and that, as a result, Mary must not be called Mother of God, but only Mother of Christ as man.

Now, in the gestation of a child, the mother does not create the soul, she engenders only the body. However, no one can say that she is the mother only of the baby’s body. As she takes the newborn into her arms, she has the joy of being mother of a person considered in its entirety, body and soul, for, as St. Tho-

mas affirms,¹⁰ to be conceived and born is something that is attributed to the entire person. In the same way, Mary Most Holy conceived, by the action of the Holy Spirit, He Who possessed two natures—the human, formed in her virginal womb, and the divine, communicated by the Father—united in a single Person: the Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Son of God in eternity and Son of Mary begotten in time. Thus, she is truly Mother of God.

It was the ardent zeal of St. Cyril of Alexandria which, under the auspices and the blessing of Pope St. Celestine I, won the victory in the battle against the Nestorian heresy, during the Council of Ephesus, which culminated with the solemn definition of the divine maternity of Our Lady as a truth of Faith: “If anyone does not confess that God is truly Emmanuel, and that on this account the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God (for accor-



In the Council of Ephesus, the doctrine of Nestorius was rejected as impious and contrary to the Catholic Faith

The Catholic Council of Ephesus, by C. Vigarini – Church of the Visitation, Ein Karem (Israel)

10) Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, op. cit., III, q.35, a.4.

ding to the flesh she gave birth to the Word of God become flesh by birth), let him be anathema.”¹¹

Having considered these fundamental points, let us analyze the Gospel passage from the Liturgy for this Solemnity.

III - A SCENE PREPARED BY GOD

^{16a} The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem...



n the previous verses leading up to this one, St. Luke narrates the apparition of the Angel to the shepherds, announcing the birth of Christ in the city of David and indicating the sign by which they should recognize Him: “And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Lk 2:12). After hearing the hymn of glory to God intoned by the “multitude of the heavenly host” (Lk 2:13), the shepherds decided among themselves: “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (Lk 2:15). This was the first response of those pious men, as soon as the angelic apparition withdrew, and they fulfilled it “in haste.”

God prepares His chosen ones

While we could focus our analysis on a historical description of the shepherds, supplying details of their lifestyle or their status in the Judaic society of that time, let us instead turn to the supernatural aspect of these figures and consider, in the first place, the fact that they had been chosen by God, from all ages, to receive the announcement of Jesus’ birth. The apparition of the Angel, preferring them above so many other men, was not by chance. God never fails to prepare His chosen ones, and we should not imagine that it was *ex abrupto* that the heavenly messenger convoked the first adorers of the Child Jesus, with all the rustic ways characteristic of their occupation.

11) DzH 252.

Like Our Lady, these humble peasants had been formed by Divine Providence, since childhood, or even from their ancestry, for this great event. As good Jews, they knew the Scriptures, especially the prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, and, by an action of grace, their love and desire for the arrival of the Saviour were constantly growing. They must have imagined scenes filled with consolation in which, for example, they saw themselves offering the Redeemer the best of themselves.

On the night of the Child Jesus' birth, perhaps they had felt a special consolation that grew in a crescendo, culminating in the apparition of the Angel. The belief commonly held in the Old Testament was that whoever saw an Angel would soon die (cf. Jgs 6:22-23; 13:21-22). However, after an initial reaction of fear (cf. Lk 2:9), upon hearing the words and hymnody of the heavenly host, the shepherds were filled with wonder, and the fear of death did not even occur to them after the Angels had disappeared.

This passage offers us an important lesson: we too were chosen by God from all eternity. It was He Who prepared everything for our sanctification, according to our specific vocation. He created very special graces for each one of us and, depending on our fidelity, these will be granted to us in increasing abundance, without our sensibly perceiving them, at times, in order to test us, until our departure from this world.

Generosity in heeding God's call

The shepherds' promptness in going to the manger suggests that they did not bring their flocks, for this would have caused some delay. The animals were left to the mercy of the wild beasts and thieves. Here is additional proof that they were led by grace: they desired something greater, and nothing was an obstacle to finding it; had this not been true, they would have been content with the vision of the Angels and stayed where they were, guarding the sheep. Nevertheless, docile to the angelic invitation, they abandoned everything, and, while they were at the grotto, they gave no thought to their flock. Their attention was wholly centred on the One Who had drawn them to Bethlehem.

Our reaction to the good news coming from Heaven should be the same. When we are called to a vocation, we must reject all that hinders us from following it, and hasten to the encounter with Him Who convokes us.

The reward of those who are docile to grace

^{16b} ...and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger.

St. Luke wanted to name Mary first, since at the manger she is also our Mediatrix with Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the treasurer of all graces.

Undoubtedly, Mary had laid the Child Jesus in the manger, with great care and affection, so that the shepherds could adore Him without attributing anything to her. The scene was one of utter simplicity, but finding themselves before the Saviour, the true God, the shepherds were stirred by a deep inner joy coming from a motion of the Holy Spirit, such as they had never felt before, and which gave them the certainty that this was the promised Messiah, the Awaited One of the nations. They paid no heed to secondary aspects, such as the fact that He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and that



Sergio Hollmann

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Adoration of the shepherds – St. Benignus Cathedral, Dijon (France)

His cradle was a manger, since those with faith place no importance on lesser details, considering only the essential: they wanted to adore the Newborn Who had been announced to them as Christ the Lord.

Sensing the supernatural joy enrapturing the visitors, it is possible that the Blessed Virgin passed the Child to each one, so that they could experience the happiness of holding Him in their arms. If Jesus gives Himself to us in Communion, it can be imagined that Our Lady acted in this way, given her exceeding motherliness. Doing so, she surely took into account the Sacrament of the Eucharist to be later instituted. What had made Simeon rejoice, thus became the shepherds' joy also.

Simple shepherds become the first heralds of the Good News

¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

By using the words “the message that had been told them,” the Evangelist was clearly not only referring to the message of the Angel. Since the shepherds were simple people, we can easily conjecture that they asked Our Lady questions about the future of that grandiose Child. And she, very affectionately, must have told them marvellous things, including theological considerations formed not only from revelations, but also from her own knowledge, since she was gifted with infused science.

They were so enthused to receive these treasures of wisdom that when they left the grotto, they immediately began transmitting them to everyone they met. This was Providence's chosen method for making echoes of the great event reach the ears of the people, thus setting in motion the preaching of the Gospel through the herald shepherds. The generalized wonder sparked by this first divulcation of the Good News confirms that the shepherds corresponded to grace and had experienced an authentic transformation.

This is another important lesson for us: only those with souls seized by enthusiasm and admiration will harvest fruits in the apostolate.

The sublime cogitations of Mary

¹⁹ And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

Our Lady analyzed the facts regarding her Divine Son—the message of St. Gabriel, the manifestation of St. Elizabeth, the canticle of St. Zechariah, etc.—as well as the events that had unfolded since the Annunciation. To further fortify her faith, she conferred these elements with everything she already knew, whether through the gifts of wisdom and of knowledge—which she possessed in their fullness—or through the perfect understanding of Scriptures, which she read “with her soul filled with insights, greater than those of Isaiah and all of the other prophets.”¹²

While the shepherds were visiting the manger, she had also regarded them closely, for she saw the effects that the Child Jesus, born a few hours before, had produced in the soul of each one. After all, if the voice of Mary was sufficient to purify St. John the Baptist while in the womb of St. Elizabeth,¹³ what change could the Infant God Himself not work in those fervent men? Noticing the effects and tracing them back to their Cause, she began to build a sublime theology.

It is said that St. Thomas Aquinas, coming out of an ecstasy, stopped writing the *Summa Theologiae*, saying: “*Non possum: quia omnia quæ scripsi videntur mihi paleæ*—I cannot continue, for everything I have written, now seems to be but straw...”¹⁴ If he had spoken with Our Lady about her cogitations, perhaps he

12) PHILIPON, OP, Marie-Michel. *Los dones del Espíritu Santo*. Barcelona: Balmes, 1966, p.370.

13) Cf. ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT. *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, n.19. In: *Œuvres Complètes*, op.cit., p.497.

14) BARTHOLOMEW OF CÁPUA. *Testimony for the Canonization Process*, apud AMEAL, João. *São Tomás de Aquino: Iniciação ao estudo da sua figura e da sua obra*. Porto: Tavares Martins, 1961, p.145.

would not have written any theological work whatsoever, for becoming acquainted with such marvels, he would have deemed any thought of his own to be inadequate...

From admiration to apostolate

²⁰ Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

Having verified, with their own senses, everything that the Angel and Our Lady had told them, the shepherds departed from the manger filled with admiration, and expressed it with a constant hymn to God on their lips. Touched by a grace that moved faith, nourished hope and fortified charity, they set about communicating this to others, for good is eminently diffusive.¹⁵ We should also do likewise: when we receive a grace, or when God sends us consolation, we should try to involve others in these gifts.

The Redeemer's first shedding of Blood

²¹ When eight days were completed for His circumcision, He was named Jesus, the name given Him by the Angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Circumcision was the precept given by God to Abraham (cf. Gn 17:10-14)—a true privilege which, distinguishing the Jews from other peoples, cleansed the stain of original sin even in the Old Testament and conferred grace, being a sign of faith in the future Passion of Christ and a prefigure of Baptism, although the gates of Heaven remained closed.¹⁶

Our Lord had no need to submit to this ritual, for He is the Supreme Good, Truth in essence, and Absolute Beauty. In taking on flesh in the womb of an Immaculate Virgin, He could not have assumed our nature in sin, which was totally incompatible with Him. However, for us, He desired to come “in the likeness of sinful

15) Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, L.III, c.24, n.6.

16) Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*, III, q.70, a.4.

flesh” (Rom 8:3), and apply even to Himself the remedy for sin, circumcision. In addition to fulfilling the law which He had instituted, this was the means by which He began the work of Redemption consummated on the Cross.

From this perspective, we see how expressive the name of Jesus is, meaning *God saves* or *Saviour*. He was given this name in the legal ceremony of circumcision, with the shedding of His first drops of Blood, which would be poured out abundantly in the Passion in reparation for our sins.

And as the bestowal of the name is the crowning moment of a person’s birth, for it will be what designates them forever, the Gospel brings us back, once again, to the divine motherhood. From the moment in which Jesus received this blessed name, Mary could be rightly called Mother of Jesus, that is, Mother of the Saviour, Mother of God.



Sergio Hollmann

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Circumcision of the Child Jesus – Cathedral of Avila (Spain)

IV - MOTHER OF GOD... AND OURS!

In face of the wealth of this Liturgy, inspired by the Holy Spirit to exalt the divine maternity of His Spouse, we ought to understand that we too are included in this privilege of Mary. All the baptized comprise part of the Holy Church, that Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head and we the members. Now, whoever is Mother of the Head is Mother of the entire Body! And when in Baptism we were born to grace,



Sergio Hollmann

“This Mother, His and ours, has pity on the most tattered, flawed and faulty son; and the more faulty, flawed and tattered, the greater is her maternal compassion”

Virgin and Child – Notre-Dame Church, Au-teuil (France)

we began to participate in the divine family as sons of God and brothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary is our Mother from this perspective also. Furthermore, just as rivers flow from a source, the font of our supernatural life is Our Lord Jesus Christ, for “from His fullness have we all received, grace upon grace” (Jn 1:16). And the Mother of this spring of graces is also the Mother of the streams that flow from it.

It was the Saviour Himself who, crucified between two thieves on the height of Calvary, lent official character to the maternity of Our Lady as extending to us. In the person of St. John the Evangelist, Jesus gave us to her as true children, saying: “Woman, behold, your

son” (Jn 19:26), and to the Apostle: “Behold, your Mother” (Jn 19:27). In this way, He placed His own Mother at the disposition of all of us, His brothers by grace and by Redemption. And she loves each one as if we were her only child, to such a degree that if we could sum up the love of all the mothers of the world for just one son, the total would not equal the love that Our Lady has for us, individually.¹⁷

17) Cf. ST. LOUIS MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT, *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la Sainte Vierge*, op. cit., n.202, p.620.

The words of Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira offer a touching and fitting consideration on this theme: “Between the Incarnate Word and us there is something in common, something unfathomably precious: we have the same Mother! A perfect Mother from the first instant of her conception without stain. A most holy Mother, in such a way that, at each moment of her existence, she never ceased to correspond to grace; she only grew and grew and grew until she attained an unimaginable height of virtue. This Mother, His and ours, has pity on the most tattered, flawed and faulty son; and the more faulty, flawed and tattered, the greater is her maternal compassion. ‘My Mother: here I am. Have pity on me today, right now, as thou hast always had, and I hope, will always have. Purify me and put me in order, make my soul ever more similar to thine and to that of Him Who, like me, was given the inexpressible happiness of having thee as Mother!’”¹⁸

We turn to Jesus, whose Nativity we celebrate during this Octave, and, filled with gratitude, implore that the graces He brought to the world at His birth in Bethlehem may reach their fullness: “Lord, Thou desirest to reign over the earth in a solemn, majestic and at the same time maternal manner. Thus, Thou dost confer Thy Kingdom to Thy most holy Mother. We beseech Thee, Lord, that her mercy triumph as soon as possible! At this moment, our hearts turn to her, filled with certainty that her mercy and goodness for each one of us is far more than that of any mother. She is ready to embrace us, to take us on her lap and protect us, whether against the wickedness of men, or the evil issuing from hell. In short, she is ready to do everything for us! Lord, do not hold her back! Let her mercy embrace us, for only in this way will our souls remain untouched by the horrors of the contemporary world. Lord, we ask that she shower upon Thy children all her maternal and merciful goodness, so that the kingdom of the love, the maternal care, and the unsurpassed goodness of Mary Most Holy will be established upon the earth. And, in the inauguration ceremony of this new historic era, may she appear, full of joy, saying to her children: ‘Finally, my Immaculate Heart has triumphed.’” ✧

18) CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. A mesma Mãe. In: *Dr. Plinio*. São Paulo. Ano IX. N.96 (Mar., 2006), p.36.