

## Devotions to Mary

Speaker: Rev. Fr. Francis Tam Kam Wing

### (A) Historical Background on Devotions to Mary

The earliest mention of Mary was in the third and fourth century A.D. when petition prayers to Mary was used by the early Christians, e.g. “under your protection, Holy Mother of God” This was especially true of the early Coptic church in Africa. It was then held that “a complete Christian must believe that Mary is the Mother of God (Mater Dei).

431 A.D. Council of Ephesus confirmed the belief that Mary was without original sin and therefore cannot die. (Mary Immaculata and Mary Assumpta). This concept was brought to the Western Church (in Rome) by the Eastern Greek and Byzantine churches. The “hermital culture” was also born at this time. The early church Fathers St. Ambrose (339-397) and St. Augustine (354-430) promoted the Immaculate Conception and Mary as the Mother of the Church.

6<sup>th</sup> Century – Mother of Sorrows (seven sorrows of Mary)

7<sup>th</sup> Century – Annunciation (Mater Annuntiata)

Middle Ages – Mary as Queen of Heaven and Our Lady of the Rosary (Mary Rossarii and Mary Regina)

Gothic churches built in honour of and dedicated to Mary sprang up in Europe around this time. A simple Palestinian maiden was started to be honoured as the Queen of Heaven and acted as a Petitioner between the Almighty God (as judge) and Man (the sinner). Many feast days of Our Lady also have “anticipated celebration” before the actual feast days.

13<sup>th</sup> century – St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi also formed their religious communities during this time. Our Lady of Good Counsel and the Virgin Mary (Mary Fidelis) came into play.

1517 – Lutheran Reformation – Martin Luther was not against devotions to the Virgin Mary, but many later Protestant denominations that follow do not accept this practice. The statues of Our Lady are present in Lutheran churches, but not in those of the Fundamentalist churches.

### Mary and Original Sin (Second High Point)

Many of the teachings by the Catholic Church were promulgated after the Reformation. The concept of Mary intervening for humanity before God was promulgated after the Reformation and therefore not accepted by Protestant churches.

Pre-Reformation	Post Reformation
1) Mary the Virgin	1) Immaculate Conception (Pope Pius IX 1854)
2) Mary, Mother of God	2) Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Pope Pius XII 1950)

Many apparitions of Our Lady also occurred during this period of time (Our Lady of Lourdes in 1858 and our Lady of Fatima in 1917).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Age of Enlightenment), many believed that truth came from reasoning alone and anything that was beyond the power of reasoning was considered absurd. Faith was undermined. The Jesuit Order was suppressed for 40 years, and statues of Our Lady were removed from churches during the French Revolution.

(B) Vatican Council II (Third High Point)

There was conflicting views on Christology and Ecclesiastic Theology. Pope Paul VI confirmed the honour bestowed by the Church on Mary. The current positions are:-

Mary – Mother of God (Mater Dei)

- (I) Immaculate Conception of Mary (Mary Immaculata))
- (II) Assumption of Mary into Heaven (Mary Assumpta)
- (III) Mary is road to Repentance and Forgiveness (intervener between God and Man)