

# Mary's role in scripture questioned by some religions

By Father Bill Le Grand

While in London, a Roman Catholic friend shared his insights on the blessed Virgin Mary with me.

"You know, Bill, both Anglican and Catholics—and I suspect Protestants—encounter different problems with Mary. For us, there's always the danger of the blessed Virgin Mary becoming a cultish figure in her own. Mary devotion, without a focus on the Trinity, can become obsessive and unscriptural. But you Anglicans and Protestants often treat Mary as

if she were a 'womb depositor' for the infant baby Jesus..."

Mike Smith, who later became a priest in the Diocese of Ottawa, left me with scriptural food for thought.

This became especially true when I encountered an Anglican colleague in the priesthood who refused to sing "The Magnificat" (The Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pp. 21-22, Anglican Book Of Common Prayer, 1959) at Evenspalm.

When I responded that the glorious Magnificat

was based on Luke 1:46-55, my friend exclaimed "that may be true, but it gives that cultish figure too much of a focus."

A United Minister friend of mine once claimed that Mary should never be mentioned in the liturgy, outside of scriptural readings. He felt she was too unimportant.

Increasingly among Bible scholars, there is an attempt to study the Mary of scripture. As good scholarship knows no denominations, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists,

Anglicans, Presbyterians, and a host of other Christian students of the Bible have collaborated in recent years to examine the mother of Jesus Christ.

Raymond Brown, highly respected as a pioneer of Marian passages in the Gospels and Acts, frequently chairs committees.

Being probably a typical Anglican, with a Protestant concern for scriptural accuracy and a Catholic love for tradition, I have struggled to know the Mary of scripture.

First, as we examine the Christian Faith, Mary is central for all parts of Christ's Body. Both the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, those statements of our collective Christian Faith based on scripture, address the Virgin Mary. Two examples:

(1) Apostles: I believe "in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary..."

(2) Nicene: "...Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven (i.e. Lord Jesus Christ came). And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary."

We recognize that the Church Fathers, guided by the Holy Spirit, believed

Mary to be a special person, ordained by God to have His son.

Second, we discover a very human Mary in scripture, a woman terrified by God's decision to have her bare His son. Deeply human, Mary didn't fail to ask "how shall this be, since I have no husband?"

Consumed by joy, after being reassured by Gabriel that she was favoured by the Father, she declares the Magnificat, starting with "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden..."

Later, when Jesus is a boy of 13 and leaves his parents without warning to encounter teachers in the temple, his mother asks, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold your father and I have been looking for you."

Here, Mary is revealed as a typical Jewish mother, concerned about her absent child. His question, "Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?" leaves Mary troubled in her heart (Luke 2:41-51).

According to John 19: 25-27, Mary stood with others at the foot of the Cross, witnessing to the horror of her son's death. This is the courageous Mary who witnesses her son's mission in the world, when most of Jesus' supporters had fled into hiding.

On the arrival of the Pentecost (Acts 1: 12-47),

Mary is with the apostles in the Upper Room. Mary's mere presence at the beginning of the Christian Church speaks volumes of importance for her place in Christian history.

Third, Mary is neither a superhuman person nor a mere depository. Gazing upon God's Word, we experience a woman, chosen by God to have His son...to make natural the most supernatural event in world history: the arrival of God's son, bringing light to darkness in a humble manner. From Mary, we respond to a Saviour who understands what it means to be a struggling human being.

Among denominations in Christ's Church, we

may experience doctrinal differences about the Blessed Virgin Mary. However, what we affirm in our common witness is a humble, loving mother who made possible through God's love the most incredible event in history.

The glorious hymn, "Sing of Mary," sums up her sign of God's revelation to us in Advent:

"Sing of Mary, pure and lowly, Virgin Mother undefiled. Sing of God's own Son Most Holy, who became her little child. Fairest child of fairest mother, God the Lord who came to earth, Word made flesh our very Brother, takes our nature by His birth." No. 807:1, Book Of Common Praise

**MAGGIO.** Funeral Mass for the late Mr. Rocco Maggio age 60 years of Schreiber who passed away at his residence on Thursday, May 15th, 1986 was held on Saturday, May 17th, 1986 from Holy Angles R.C. Church with Father Peter Groulx officiating. Interment was in Schreiber Cemetery.

Survived by his wife Angela, sons Vince and Mike both of Schreiber, daughters Maria (Mrs. R. Muia) of Toronto, Cathy (Mrs. P., Alfano) of St. Catharines and Rita of Schreiber. Also survived by 5 grandchildren, 3 brothers and 2 sisters. Predeceased by his parents. Honorary pallbearers were Antonio Deleo, Cos Filane, Philipo Figliomeni, Tony Pasqualino, Peter Costa and Vince Deleo. Active bearers were Dom & Mike Deleo, Mike Gutta, Coe Costa, Coe Alfano and Jim Speziale.

Attending from out or town were Tony and Vince Deleo of Toronto and Guiseppi & Cosimo Lombardo of Thunder Bay.

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