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Article

The History and Theology of Mary's Title as Mother of the Church: A Sociology of Religion Perspective through Durkheim and Weber

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Abstract

Pope Francis, on February 11, 2018, decreed that an ancient devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title "Mother of the Church," be inserted into the Roman Calendar and be celebrated annually on the Monday after Pentecost. The inclusion of this feast highlights the importance of Mary's maternal role in the mystery of the Church and renewed reflection on the meaning and implications of this Marian title. This study employs historical-theological research to trace the development of Mary's title as Mother of the Church and examines its significance in the contemporary life of the Church. In presenting the said theme, the discussion is structured into these three major themes: first, the Historical Development of Mary's Title as Mother of the Church, which traces its emergence from early Christian writings to the Second Vatican Council; second, Biblical and Theological Foundations by exploring the scriptural and doctrinal basis for Mary's maternal role; and third, Maternal Presence in the Life of the Church by examining post-Vatican II documents, devotions and Marian shrines that illustrate her ongoing guidance in the Church. This title of the Blessed Virgin Mary encourages the growth of the maternal sense of the Church in the pastors, religious, and faithful. Through the promotion of this title, the invocation to Mary seeks to foster among the faithful the growth of genuine Marian piety. This reflection is further enriched by Durkheim's notion of the collective conscience, which situates Marian devotion as a unifying moral force within the Church, and Weber's concept of vocational calling, which frames Mary's maternal presence as inspiring the faithful toward lived responsibility and service. These sociological insights deepen the understanding of how the Marian title functions not only theologically but also socially in shaping communal identity and religious practice.

Keywords: *Blessed Virgin Mary, Durkheim collective conscience, Mother of the Church, Sociology of religion, Weber vocational calling*

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Introduction

The Blessed Virgin Mary holds an important role in the history of salvation. She was endowed with "the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God," (Vatican II, 1984, para. 53) and, in the order of grace, she is also "the mother of the members of Christ." (Vatican II, 1984, para. 53) Her physical maternity began at the Annunciation, when she was chosen to become the Mother of God. It continued beneath the cross, where she stood as the Mother of all believers, making her our spiritual mother. Through this dual role, Mary's motherhood extends beyond the disciples to embrace the entire Church, exercised with her unique relationship with God and with the Church, which is "a people, made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." (Vatican II, 1984, para. 4) Through this dual role, Mary's motherhood extends beyond the disciples to embrace the entire Church, expressed through her unique relationship with God and with the Church, exercised with her unique relationship with God and with the Church, which is "a people, made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Vatican II, 1984, para. 4) From a sociological perspective, this maternal presence resonates with Durkheim's theory of the collective conscience, wherein Marian devotion embodies a unifying moral force that strengthens communal identity and solidarity within the Church (Durkheim, 1997; Callegaro, 2021).

Because of her unique role in the divine plan of salvation, Mary has been honored with numerous titles and invocations expressing the people's love and devotion to her. Among these invocations is the title *Mother of the Church,* which articulates her relationship with the community of believers, united with Christ and forming his mystical body. Mary is the Mother of Christ, the Head of the Body, His Church. Since she is the Mother of the Head of the Church, she is also the Mother of the Church, the Body of Christ. (Dollen, 1989) Pope Paul VI solemnly proclaimed this at the Conclusion of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Council:

> "We declare Mary Most Holy Mother of the Church, that is, of all the Christian people, both of the faithful and of the Pastors, who call her most beloved Mother; and we decree that under this title all the Christian people from now on pay even greater honor to the Mother of God and address supplications to her." (Paul VI, 1964)

The solemn proclamation of Paul VI entrusted the implementation of the Second Vatican Council to the Virgin Mary. It is also a decisive moment in the Church's articulation of Marian doctrine in relation to ecclesiology. It is an expression of conviction and devotion in the life of the Christian faithful. Later reaffirmed in 1968, in the Credo of the People of God: "We believe that the Most Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, the Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role toward the members of Christ…" (John Paul II, 1987, para. 47) The proclamation emphasizes Mary's cooperation in the birth and growth of the divine life among the faithful.

Chronologically, this development also reflects Weber's concept of vocational calling, as Marian devotion inspires the faithful toward lived responsibility, service, and ecclesial participation (Weber, 2002; Kalberg, 2014). Her maternal role thus functions not only as theological doctrine but also as a sociological catalyst for shaping communal practice and identity.

Subsequent developments, including a new set of votive Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, were inserted into the Roman Missal during the Holy Year of Reconciliation of 1975. Still, priests would need to conduct a dedicated search for the texts. Pope John Paul II, on March 13, 1980, added the invocation Mother of the Church in the Litany of Loreto (Olsen, 2024). It was not until the Great Jubilee of 2000 that the votive Mass for Mary, Mother of the Church, was included in the Roman Missal. Pope Francis, on February 11, 2018, Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, issued a decree establishing the Memorial of Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to be celebrated annually on Monday after Pentecost Sunday. It became a universal feast being celebrated on a fixed date. The inclusion of the said feast is to highlight the enduring importance of the maternal role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, "as a caring guide to the emerging Church. Mary had already begun her mission in the Upper Room, praying with the Apostles while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14)." (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2018)

This study employs historical-theological research to trace the development of Mary's title as Mother of the Church and to examine its significance in the contemporary life of the Church. In presenting the said theme, the discussion is structured into these three major themes: first, the Historical Development of Mary's Title as Mother of the Church, which traces its emergence from early Christian writings to the Second Vatican Council; second, Biblical and Theological Foundations by exploring the scriptural and doctrinal basis for Mary's maternal role; and third, Maternal Presence in the Life of the Church by examining post-Vatican II documents, devotions and Marian shrines that illustrate her ongoing guidance in the Church. This title of the Blessed Virgin Mary encourages the growth of the "maternal sense of the Church in the pastors, religious, and faithful." (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2018) Through the promotion of this title, the invocation to Mary seeks to foster among the faithful "growth of genuine Marian piety." (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 2018)

Historical Development of Mary's Title as Mother of the Church

As early as 1100, the title "Mother of the Church" was used within the Catholic Church. Berengaud, Bishop of Treves, was the first to use this title for Mary. (Dodd, 2006) By the next century, the title became popular, starting with the Cistercians at Solesmes, St. Albert the Great, and in an old Irish Litany (Dollen, 1989). The relationship between Mary and the Church had been explored even before this period.

The Church Fathers, St. Ambrose (339-397) and St. Augustine (354-430), developed the themes of Mary and the Church. St. Ambrose was the first Christian author to call Mary the type and image of the Church (Gambero, 1999). He said that Mary is

> married but a virgin, because she is the type of the Church, which is also married but remains immaculate. The Virgin [Church] conceived us by the Holy Spirit and, as a virgin, gave birth to us without pain. And perhaps this is why holy Mary, married to one man [Joseph], is made fruitful by another [the Holy Spirit], to show that the individual churches are filled with the Spirit and with grace, even as they are united to the person of a temporal priest. (Gambero, 1999).

St. Augustine, following his mentor, also expounds the relationship between Mary and the Church.

Mary is holy and blessed, but the Church is greater than the Virgin Mary. Why? Because Mary is part of the Church, a holy member, an outstanding member, a supereminent member, but a member of the whole body nonetheless. If she is a member of the whole body, the body is undoubtedly greater than one of its members (Gambero, 1999). At this stage, the communal identity of the Church, expressed through Marian devotion, reflects Durkheim's concept of the collective conscience, wherein shared beliefs and practices unify the faithful into a moral community (Durkheim, 1893/1997; Callegaro, 2021). In the 12th century, the Abbot of Deutz, Rupert, was the first author to interpret the Calvary scene as a maternity scene for the Church. He explains:

> "By what right is the disciple whom Jesus loved the son of the mother of the Lord, or she his mother? It is by the fact that she then bore without pain the cause of the salvation of all when she gave birth to God made man from her flesh; and now with great pain she was in labor when, as we have just been told, she stood by his Cross… Accordingly, because there the Blessed Virgin truly born the pains of a woman in labor and in the Passion of her only-begotten Son gave birth to the salvation of us all, she is clearly the Mother of us all. Because then it was said by him (Christ) of this disciple: "Woman, behold your son," most justly did he (John) have the care of his Mother. Likewise, the words to the disciple, "Behold your mother," could rightly be said of any other disciple, if he were present. Although, as we have said, she is the Mother of us all, yet more fittingly was she, as a virgin, commended to this virgin." (Miraville, 2007)

The Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, using the Eve-Mary parallel, reflects on the Virgin's motherhood, says that

> "As Abel and his descendants were formed from Adam and Eve, so from Christ and his Church the whole Christian people was formed. And as Eve is the mother of Abel and of us all, so the Christian people has the Virgin for a mother." (Gambero, 1999).

St. Bonaventure uses the scene at Calvary to expound the spiritual maternity of Mary, which is a result of her complete acceptance of God's will for humanity. It was by mercy and piety that Mary expressed her maternal love for us.

On September 5, 1895, Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Adiutricem*, Jesus, in giving the Church to Mary, calls her the "Mother of the Church, the Teacher and Queen of the Apostles, to whom, besides, she confided no small part of the divine mysteries which she kept in her heart." (Leo XIII, 1895) At the Opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary under the titles Help of Christians and Help of Bishops in support of the Council's successful realization.

During the Second Vatican Council, many theologians debated whether to refer to Mary as the Mother of the Church. Cardinal Maurice Roy of the Theological Commission, in October 1964, argued that the title was not wrong but could easily be misinterpreted as meaning that Mary stood apart from the Church (Roten, 2015). They also noted that the title lacked historical tradition, originated only in the twelfth century, and was not widely disseminated. Another is that many council members were moving away from the Mystical Body ecclesiology toward the People of God ecclesiology, leading to renewed interest in presenting Mary in a human context. This led the theological commission to reject the title Mother of the Church. At the Closing of the Third Session of the Council on November 21, 1964, Pope Paul VI proclaimed Mary as Mother of the Church, grounded in Mary's "maternal intimacy and proximity to her Son and his mission." (Roten, 2015) It is an expression of piety by the whole Church, honoring Mary and highlighting her singularity and eminence within the Church. Paul VI based Mary's Motherhood of the Church on St. Paul's doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, highlighting "dependence of the Church on Christ, and in subtle ways characterized the relationship between Pope and Council." (Roten, 2015) This proclamation also reflects Weber's notion of vocational calling, as Marian devotion inspires the faithful toward lived responsibility, service, and ecclesial participation, situating Mary's maternal role as both theological doctrine and sociological catalyst (Weber, 1905/2002; Kalberg, 2014).

The Biblical and Theological Foundation of Mary's Maternal Role

The maternal role of Mary traces its origins to the Old Testament, where typological associations with the Mother of God are evident. One method for discerning the work of God in the Old Testament is through prefiguration or typologies, which were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament narrates the history of the chosen people of God, who were the Israelites. It unfolds

God's work, actively participating in the life of His people as they are led towards the fulfillment of the promised Messiah. In the prophetic writings, the phrase "Daughter of Zion" is a poetic synonym for Jerusalem, representing the faithful Israel awaiting the fulfillment of the promised Messiah. After the Babylonian exile, the prophets began to describe Jerusalem as the universal mother, gathering all her children from all nations (Buby, 1997). This maternal imagery later becomes associated with Mary, who embodies the mystery of the Church and is seen as the new Jerusalem and the universal mother, the perfect realization of Zion (Buby, 1997). In biblical language, the expression "Daughter of Zion" means that the name of the town itself, or the district, identifies the town or district. In ancient Israel, Zion is the city of David, which belongs to God. The prophet Zephaniah warns of the Day of the Lord, a time of anger, suffering, distress, destruction, darkness, and devastation that would affect the whole earth, and calls the Daughter of Zion to conversion and repentance. This call is first expressed by the prophet Hosea, who says that God's covenant with His people is like marriage. Yahweh as the groom, and the Daughter of Zion as the bride. In the New Testament, this symbolism became clearer with the Church being betrothed to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2, New American Bible) This collective imagery of Zion as mother, fulfilled in Mary, reflects Durkheim's concept of the collective conscience, where shared symbols and sacred figures unify the faithful into a moral community (Durkheim, 1893/1997; Callegaro, 2021).

The maternal role of Mary, which emerged during the Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38, New American Bible), shows that the Daughter of Zion is not just a symbol but a real person. In Mary, the people of God are represented personally, which is the Church (Deiss, 1972), just as Zion once represented them collectively. Through the free consent of Mary, she brought forth the Messiah, who is the head of the mystical body of Christ. God needs the cooperation of His people. It was from God's chosen people, Israel, that the Mother of God came as expressed in Mary's fiat when the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she would be the Mother of God. The message spoken by the Prophet Zephaniah to the Daughter of Zion parallels the Annunciation story in the Gospel of Luke. It both shows a call to rejoice, the presence of the Lord, the command not to be afraid, and the promise of the Messiah. It shows the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, carried through to the New Testament. Mary is the living realization of the prophecy. After the Annunciation, Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth in Ain Karim. When Elizabeth greeted Mary, her words echoed the joyful praise once sung by the Levites before the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament (Deiss, 1972). Just as the Ark once held the sign of God's presence among His people, Mary now bears God's presence with her. In connection with the image of the Daughter of Zion, Mary is understood as the living Ark who carries the Lord.

Mary appears at key moments during the Public Ministry of Jesus. The Gospel of St. John provides background on Mary's spiritual maternity, which begins at the Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-11, New American Bible). It was in Cana where she exhibited her true role in the work of Christ and in the mission of the Church. The first

miracle of Jesus occurred at the request of His mother, a striking manifestation of His divine power (Elbert, 1958). Pope John Paul II pointed out that it was the "Mother's discreet and effective role, when by her words she persuades her Son to perform his first sign. Although her influence is discreet and maternal, her presence proves decisive." (John Paul II, 1997) The most important point of Mary's spiritual maternity is at the foot of the Cross (John 19: 26-27, New American Bible). Standing below the Cross, as *Lumen Gentium* would say, she united herself with a "maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth." (Vatican II, 1984, para. 58) Jesus entrusted His mother, Mary, to the care of His beloved disciple, John, and He gave John to her care, appointing her as the Mother of all believers. A new spiritual relationship forms between them: Mary becomes the mother of his followers, and the disciples make her their mother. It was on Calvary that Mary received the Church through the "pierced side of the dead Christ as it issued from His heart." (Elbert, 1958)

Mary continues her guiding role in the early Church, gathering with the Apostles in the Upper Room to pray as they await the coming of the Holy Spirit. The first community that prepared for the birth of the Church. Her presence helps shape what the Church would become. John Paul II, in his reflection, adds that "in the nascent Church she passes on to the disciples her memories of the Incarnation, the infancy, the hidden life and the mission of her divine Son as a priceless treasure, thus helping to make him known and to strengthen the faith of believers." (John Paul II, 1997) This formative role also resonates with Weber's concept of vocational calling, as Mary's maternal presence inspires the faithful toward lived responsibility, service, and ecclesial participation, situating her role as both theological doctrine and sociological catalyst (Weber, 1905/2002; Kalberg, 2014).

The Maternal Presence of Mary in the Life of the Church

The maternal presence of Mary continues in the life of the Church. She remains united with Christ as His Mother and with the Church as the Mother of all believers. The Sacred Scriptures were the first witnesses to Mary's maternal care, as recorded in the Gospel of John. It was in Cana that Mary's caring motherhood was shown, and Christ's sacrifice on the cross confirmed her motherhood. Even after Christ ascended into heaven, she continued her new mission as the "spiritual mother of the most beloved of the disciples and of the nascent church." (Paul VI, 2001) Mary became our mother in the order of grace. (Vatican II, 1984, para. 61) A new motherhood that is "generated by faith, is the fruit of the new love which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son." (John Paul II, 1990) Mary's maternal role does not diminish Jesus' role as mediator; instead, it reveals the power of His Son. Mary assists the faithful through Jesus. (John Paul II, 1990, para. 38) It should be remembered and recognized that before anyone else, it was God himself who entrusted to the Virgin of Nazareth, giving her His Son in the mystery of Incarnation to be His mother. This enduring maternal presence also

reflects Durkheim's concept of the collective conscience, as Marian devotion strengthens communal identity and solidarity, binding the faithful together through shared practices and symbols (Durkheim, 1893/1997; Callegaro, 2021).

As Mother of the Lord, fulfilled in her life, faith, and charity, and in perfect union with Christ. (Vatican II, 1984, para. 63) It was through this that she became the model of the Church, and her perfection in these areas helps the Church to live what is called forth. Mary cooperated in the growth of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ by her unceasing prayers as inspired by her most ardent charity, and also through her example, which is most important, taken from the famous axiom "*Verba movent, exempla trahunt*" (Words move, examples attract). She is the attentive virgin (Paul VI, 1985), invoked "under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix." (Vatican II, 1984, para. 62) Following her example, every faithful

> "Through the faith and piety of individual believers; through the traditions of Christian families or "domestic churches," of parish and missionary communities, religious institutes and dioceses; through the radiance and attraction of the great shrines where not only individuals or local groups, but sometimes whole nations and societies, even whole continents, seek to meet the Mother of the Lord, the one who is blessed because she believed is the first among believers and therefore became the Mother of Emmanuel." (John Paul II, 1987, para. 28)

Today, the spiritual motherhood of Mary transcends space and time, for she has always been present. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Mother of God has made her presence felt, and her voice has been heard, calling people to prayer, penance, and conversion through apparitions. From her heavenly home, she visited the earth, showing her concern for the affairs of man. Places like Guadalupe in Mexico (John Paul II, 1987, para. 28), Lourdes in France, and Fatima in Portugal, which offered comfort and hope to pilgrims (John Paul II, 2002, para. 7). In 1531, Our Lady appeared to Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico. During the fourth apparition, while worried for his sick uncle, Juan Bernardino, Juan Diego tried to avoid the Virgin but was met by her as she came down the hill to greet him. Fearful and embarrassed, Juan Diego explained his uncle's sickness and asked to delay his mission. The Virgin listened to Juan Diego and, after speaking, said these words to him:

"Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest son, that what frightened you, what afflicted you, is nothing, do not let it disturb your face, your heart; do not fear this sickness nor any other sickness, nor any sharp and hurtful thing. Am I not here, I who have the honor to be your Mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more?" (Anderson and Chavez, 2009)

The Virgin shows that she is a mother ready and attentive to listen to her children's pleas. It also shows her maternal concern over their temporal affairs.

Pope Pius XII issued the Encyclical *Le Pelegrinage de Lourdes, which* reminds us that Our Lady is in touch with our realities:

Just as the Immaculate, compassionate of our miseries, but discerning our real needs, came to men to remind them of the essential and austere steps of religious conversion, so the ministers of the Word of God should, with supernatural confidence, point out to souls the narrow road which leads to life. They will do this without forgetting the spirit of kindness and patience which they profess, but also without concealing anything of the Gospel's demands. In the school of Mary, they will learn to live not only so that they may give Christ to the world, but also, if need be, to await with faith the hour of Jesus and to remain at the foot of the cross. (Pius XII, 1957, para. 12)

The same challenge was brought by his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, during his pilgrimage to Lourdes, inviting Our Lady to speak to the "Christians of the third millennium. Let us listen to her!" (John Paul II, 2004) Today, Marian Shrines becomes a place where the People of God can "meet the Mother of God in order to find, the radius of the maternal presence of her who believed, a strengthening of their own faith." (John Paul II, 1987, para. 28)

In the Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus, Pope Paul VI mentions two exercises of piety which are widely known: the Angelus and the Rosary. The faithful engage in a spiritual dialogue with Mary, meditating on the Paschal Mystery through the recitation of the Angelus, which sanctifies various moments throughout the day (Paul VI, 1974, para. 41). The Rosary, which is the "compendium of the Gospel," meditates on the life of Christ, conforming us to Christ, and by reciting it, "the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer." (John Paul II, 2003, para. 1) The same very hands that hold us in our journey. This ongoing maternal presence also resonates with Weber's concept of vocational calling, as Marian devotion inspires believers toward lived responsibility, service, and ecclesial participation, situating her role as both theological doctrine and sociological catalyst (Weber, 1905/2002; Kalberg, 2014).

Sociological Implications

The title Mother of the Church carries profound sociological meaning beyond its theological depth. Marian devotion, expressed through this title, has historically functioned as a unifying symbol for the Christian community. Drawing from Durkheim's concept of the collective conscience, Mary embodies the shared values, beliefs, and sacred traditions that bind the faithful together. Her maternal presence provides a moral anchor, reinforcing solidarity and cohesion within the Church. This is evident in the way Marian feasts, shrines, and devotions become communal experiences in which believers collectively affirm their identity as members of a spiritual family. Mary's role also shapes the transmission of faith across generations.

Families, parishes, and religious communities invoke her as a model of piety, embedding Marian devotion into daily practices such as the Rosary and the Angelus. These rituals are not merely private acts of prayer but communal practices that sustain continuity of belief and strengthen cultural cohesion. In this sense, Marian devotion operates as a sociological mechanism for preserving tradition and ensuring the intergenerational survival of Catholic identity.

Weber's notion of vocational calling further illuminates the sociological implications of Mary's maternal role. Her example inspires believers to live out their faith through service, charity, and ecclesial participation. Marian devotion thus becomes more than reverence; it motivates practical engagement in the life of the Church. By presenting Mary as a maternal figure who embodies responsibility and care, the Church encourages the faithful to embrace their own vocations—whether as clergy, religious, or laypersons—in ways that contribute to the flourishing of the community. Moreover, Marian devotion has historically offered resilience during times of crisis. Apparitions at Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima demonstrate how Mary's maternal presence offered hope and stability to communities facing social upheaval, illness, or war. Sociologically, these events highlight religion's role in stabilizing societies by offering shared symbols of protection and continuity. Mary's maternal care becomes a cultural anchor, helping communities navigate uncertainty while maintaining cohesion.

In some places, Marian shrines serve as points of convergence even for people of other faiths. A particular form of respect, distanced curiosity, and practical coexistence persists (Mentel, 2025). The sharing of places with Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and people from other faiths is seen not only in a religious sense but also in everyday practices among neighbors and in mutual relationships. Finally, the globalization of Marian devotion underscores its sociological significance in the modern world. The universal celebration of Mary as Mother of the Church transcends local boundaries, fostering cross-cultural solidarity among Catholics worldwide. Pilgrimages and international Marian feasts illustrate how religious symbols adapt to diverse contexts while preserving their communal essence. Pilgrimage sites also serve as essential places for interfaith encounter (Mentel, 2025). In this way, Mary's maternal role not only strengthens local communities but also contributes to the global identity of the Church.

Conclusion

The Mother of the Church represents a synthesis of centuries of historical, biblical, and theological reflection on the unique role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the history of salvation. This belief flows from the fundamental Marian principle of Divine Motherhood. Historically, from the early Fathers of the Church, Mary is viewed as a type of the Church, embodying the mystery of the Church as a virgin and mother. Historically, the title Mother of the Church was used in the Catholic Church as early

as the 12th century. This understanding evolved from the early Father of the Church's understanding of Mary as the type of the Church. A typology shows the relationship between Mary and the Church, both of whom exemplify virginity and motherhood. Later, the title was formally proclaimed by Pope Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council, which declared her as the Mother of the faithful and its pastors. This historical development also resonates with Durkheim's concept of the collective conscience, as Marian devotion has consistently functioned as a unifying moral force, strengthening communal identity and solidarity across centuries.

Theologically, the motherhood of Mary is rooted in her status as the Mother of God, the Head of the Mystical Body, which extends to the Church, which is His Mystical Body. This is grounded in the Sacred Scriptures as prefigured in the Old Testament, as she is referred to as the Daughter of Zion. Jerusalem is the universal mother, the perfect realization of Zion. Mary cooperated with God, and it was from His chosen people that the Mother of God came through. Mary was present in the key moments of the Public Ministry of Jesus. The Wedding at Cana was where Jesus performed his first miracle through Mary's intercession, and Mary was appointed at the foot of the Cross as the Mother of all believers. Her spiritual motherhood, generated by faith and by her participation in the work of Christ, continues to be present today. In the contemporary life of the Church, Mary continues to be a perfect model of faith and charity, guiding the faithful through her unceasing prayers and following her example. This is made visible through her maternal intercession, through her apparitions, through which the nineteenth century is called the "Marian Era." (Paul VI, 1967, para. 6) As this is the time when the role of Mary in the history of salvation "has been more deeply understood by the vast strata of the Christian people." (Paul VI, 1967, para. 6) Marian Shrines have been meeting places for people to encounter the Blessed Mother, including Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima. These places call for comfort, hope, and a call to conversion. Pope Francis, during his 2023 visit to Fatima, called her "Our Lady in a hurry." He further explains that "Every time there is a problem, every time we invoke her, she doesn't delay, she hurries." (McLellan, 2023)

In facilitating the spiritual dialogue through which believers receive abundant blessings, two pious exercises were mentioned, the Angelus and the Rosary. It both commemorates and meditates on the life of Christ through the lens of Mary. Invoking the Mother of God as Mother of the Church calls every follower of Christ to imitate the example of our heavenly Mother. As Signum Magnum would reiterate the thrust of the Second Vatican Council, through which: "Let the faithful remember that true devotion consists neither in fruitless and passing emotion, nor in a certain vain

credulity. Rather, it proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues." (Paul VI, 1967, para. 1) This ongoing maternal presence also reflects Weber's concept of vocational calling, as Marian devotion inspires believers toward lived responsibility, service, and ecclesial participation, situating her role as both theological doctrine and sociological catalyst.

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