

MARY: **MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES**

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When the wine had given out, Jesus' Mother said to him, "They have no wine left" (John 2:3)



Rev. Fr. Anthony Kanu, O.S.A

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DEDICATION

Uchenna Emmanuel Kanu
My brother

FOREWORD

The word mediator means someone who is a go-between. In Timothy 2:5, Saint Paul refers to Jesus as the “One mediator,” this, however, does not denote something exclusive. In fact we are all mediators when we pray for one another. Our mediating does not in any way diminish the role of Christ the Mediator; in fact, it glorifies the Father, because it is through Jesus that we can approach with confidence the throne of grace (Heb.4:14-16).

If we can be mediators, why can Mary the mother of Jesus not be? Mary's title of mediatrix arises from her cooperation in the Incarnation and in the Redemption of mankind. Many Catholics do not have

a problem with the title “Mediatrice” but some flinch when they hear, “Mediatrice of All Graces.” In Luke 1:28, the angel greeted her thus, “Hail, full of grace.” The fact that she is full of grace implies that all graces are available to her.

I recommend **MARY: MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES** by Fr. Anthony to all who seek to know more on Marian mediation and its biblical foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

During my days in the primary school, if I am told at school by a teacher or the principal to get a new pair of shoes or school uniform, I always struggled with how to present this request to my dad. However, when I get home and make the request, he would usually ask me to be quiet. What I did at such times was to join my mother in the kitchen and help her out in the many ways that I could. I would then wait for the appropriate time to tell her that daddy asked me to keep quiet when I spoke to him about buying me a new uniform or replacing my worn out shoes. I remember how my Mummy would tell me not to worry that she would do something about it. When

they go to bed at night, she would speak to my dad about the same issue that I had spoken to him earlier. The next morning, the same dad who asked me to be quiet would call me and ask me to speak to him again about the issue I presented yesterday. This is simply because mummy had done her work—she pleaded on my behalf. When the door to my dad's heart seemed to be locked, she had the key. When it looked difficult, she had her way of making it easy. When my dad became inaccessible, she mediated between myself and him. This is the role that a good mother plays in the life of her children. This is also the role that the Blessed Virgin Mary plays in the life of her beloved children.

I write this little work because of the questions that many people have asked about Mary's role as the Mediatrix of all

graces. This work, therefore, **attempts at bringing simple insights to ordinary minds about Mary's place as the Mediatrix of all Graces.**

THE MEANING OF GRACE

Grace is from the Latin word *gratis*, which means “unmerited favor”. To understand the Word “unmerited”, we might need to begin from the word “merit”. To merit something means to earn it or deserve it. For instance, if a person has completed his/her studies in philosophy for a Bachelors degree, and fulfilled all the necessary conditions, it can be said that the person merits the Bachelors degree. Or in the case of a child in school who reads very hard and his or her result comes out good, it is said that he or she merits the good result. Contrary to merit, is the concept “unmerited”, which means to receive something that you did not earn or something that you do not deserve. For instance, if a child does not

read at all, and has not passed any tests, only to emerge as the best student of his class- it would be said that it is an unmerited result. However, added to “unmerited” is “favor”, and favor means an act of kindness or something good that is given to you. How then does this help us to understand the meaning of grace?

From the foregoing, grace can be understood as God reaching downward to a people who are constantly pushing back against Him or in rebellion against Him. Scripture tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) and that we deserve death as a consequence of our sins (Rom. 6:23). But in His loving kindness and mercy, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us and take upon Himself the punishment that we deserve. He became sin that we may become the righteousness of God. The letter of St

Paul to the Romans says that righteousness “will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:24-25). Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Grace is, therefore, an unmerited favour from God.

THE MEANING OF MEDIATRIX

Mediatrix refers to a female go-between between two parties. Mediatrix specifies the feminity of the go-between. The Latin suffix *-tor* denotes masculine agency and the Latin *-trix* denotes feminine agency – like *waiter* and *waitress* – *Mediator* and *Mediatrix*. Therefore, it is because of Our Lady's gender that she is referred to as mediatrix. The Bible has stories of female mediators, and Esther is a good example from the Old Testament. A cruel man named Haman had convinced King Xerxes to command the killing of all the Jews in his kingdom. By royal decree, the date was set. The Jews had only months to live. Queen Esther was challenged by her cousin, Mordecai, to go before the King and appeal for the lives of the Jews

that was at the moment, hanging on a balance. Esther struggled with this challenge. Simply going before the king without being invited could result in her death. As she walked into the court of the king, the most dramatic scene in the Book of Esther unfolded. Certainly, all those who watched the beautiful queen approach the king held their breath in fear. King Xerxes extended his scepter to Esther, as a symbol that he would allow her into his presence. Esther found favour in his eyes. (Esther 5-10). The law stipulated that no one could approach the king unless invited by him. Those who came uninvited were put to death, unless the king extended his scepter and graciously spared their life. Esther invited the King and Haman to a banquet.

King Xerxes and Haman came to Esther's second banquet. The king asked what was on Esther's mind.

Then Queen Esther answered, "King Xerxes, I hope you will show me your favor. I hope you will be pleased to let me live. That is what I want. Please spare my people. That's my appeal to you. My people and I have been sold to be destroyed. We've been sold to be killed and wiped out." **(Esther 7:3-4).**

Esther asked the king to spare her life and the lives of her people. Remember, the king did not yet know that she was a Jew, so he did not realize that Esther was talking about Haman's wicked plot.

King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is the man who has dared to do such a thing? And where is he?" Esther said, "The man hates us! He's our enemy! He's this evil Haman!" **(Esther 7:5-6).**

Burning with anger, King Xerxes walked away from the banquet trying to think about all that Esther had just told him. King Xerxes returned to the banquet and found Haman desperately begging Esther to have mercy over his life. Haman knew his day would not finish any better than it began. At this very moment, one of the King's servants arrived with a message which took King Xerxes' anger over the edge.

Then Harbona, one of the king's personal servants, said, "Your Majesty, Haman built a tower seventy-five feet high beside his house, so he could hang Mordecai on it. And Mordecai is the very one who spoke up and saved your life." "Hang Haman from his own tower!" the king commanded
(Esther 7:9)

Esther pleaded for the Jewish people; she was their mediatrix: the go-between between them and the great King Xerxes. The role of Esther as the mediatrix of the Jewish people is a type of the mediatrix role of the Blessed Virgin Mary between God and Humanity.

INTERPRETING ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO TIMOTHY

The objection to Our Lady's maternal mediation always stems from the way many have interpreted the First Letter of St Paul to Timothy. In this text, St Paul writes:

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5).

A deeper interpretation of this text reveals that St. Paul did not intend to condemn subsequent mediations after Christ. Rather, what it teaches against is rivalry, or autonomous ideas of mediation in relation to Jesus Christ. Therefore, 1 Timothy 2:5 establishes the primacy of Christ as the one mediator, but not to the exclusion of the possibility of secondary, creaturely mediation. This

explains why St. Thomas Aquinas taught that:

Christ alone is the perfect Mediator of God and men, inasmuch as, by His death, He reconciled the human race to God... However, nothing hinders certain others from being called mediators, in some respect, between God and man, forasmuch as they cooperate in uniting men to God, dispositively or ministerially.

For instance, a priest mediates between the congregation and God. He brings them God's Word of peace, hope and forgiveness, while he takes their pains and thanksgiving to God. So were the Patriarchs, so were the priests of the Old and New Testaments, and so were the prophets. They stood between the people and God. The fact that they mediated between the people and God does not mean that they took the place of

Christ. If we read this letter of Saint Paul to Timothy more deeply and broadly, we would gain a new and better understanding of the Scripture's understanding of mediation. In a subsequent chapter, the same Scripture calls for a subordinate or secondary kind of mediation¹:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth
(1 Tim 2:1-4).

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q 26, A 1.

The fact that we have become part of the body of Christ, and thus, part of the redemptive ministry of Jesus, we cannot shy away from a secondary or subordinate form of mediation². And when we talk about the incarnation, we can say that Mary was the first and foremost participant in His mediation, not by necessity, but by the divine will.

² *Lumen Gentium*, no. 62

MARY AS A SECONDARY MEDIATOR

The idea of Jesus as mediator does not exclude the idea of other people praying or mediating for us, whether in heaven or on earth. Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor said that one can be a source of a thing in two ways: as the principal source and as a mediate source. The fact that it has come from a mediate source does not in any way mean that it is not principally from the principal source. In the same way, the fact that Mary is a mediatrix does not in any way diminish Jesus' place as our principal mediator. Saint Pope John Paul II taught in his message at the General Audience (Oct 1, 1997) that:

Saint Paul proclaims Christ as the only mediator (cfl Tim 2:5-63, and excludes any type of parallel

mediation, but he does not rule out subordinate mediation. In fact, everyone is called to co-operate with Christ in the work of salvation. Mary's maternal mediation derives from Christ's. It is not an obstacle to Christ's unique and perfect mediation, but highlights its fruitfulness and efficacy³.

God Himself looks for mediators. He said in the prophecy of Isaiah:

On your walls, Jerusalem, I have placed sentries; they must never be silent day or night. They must remind the Lord of his promises and never let him forget them. They must give him no rest until he restores Jerusalem and makes it a city the whole world praises (Is 62:6).

³Pope John Paul II, A general audience (Oct 1, 1997)

In the book of the prophecy of Ezekiel, God said:

And I sought for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore, I have poured out my indignation upon them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath... declares the Lord (22:30-31).

In both prophecies from Isaiah and Ezekiel, God is in search of men and women who would plead on behalf of His people. If ordinary human beings could do this, how much more the Mother of God.

MARY'S DIVINE MOTHERHOOD AS A BASIS FOR MEDIATION

Mary alone is the Mother of God. She alone became the Mother of God when she gave birth to the Word Made Flesh. Thus, only she has an intrinsic relationship to the hypostatic union as she was the only creature instrumentally involved in God becoming Man. Her mediation in the granting of the source of grace indicates that she was destined for a continuous universal communication of the flow of grace⁴. To call Mary mother already contains within it an inference that she has the power to mediate grace. Saint Pope John Paul II teaches that:

Mary's mediation is intimately linked with her motherhood....With

⁴ M.J. Sheeben, *Mariology*, vol. 2. St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1947, 265

*the redeeming death of her Son, the maternal mediation of the handmaid of the Lord took on a universal dimension, for the work of redemption embraces the whole of humanity ... Mary's cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, in the universality of the mediation of the Redeemer, the one Mediator*⁵.

And indeed, she participates uniquely in the mediation of her Son. She is Mother to all in the order of grace⁶, and this Motherhood of Our Lady is a gift to the world given by Christ at Calvary (John 19:27)⁷. Her power to mediate grace is more evident at the wedding at Cana in Galilee.

⁵ **Pope John Paul II**, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, 1987.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater.html

⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, n. 61

⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1987, No. 45.

THE WEDDING AT CANA IN GALILEE (JN. 2:2-12)

An event in Scripture that brings out the place of Mary as Mediatrix is the story of the Wedding at Cana in Galilee. There was a marriage at Cana in Galilee and the Mother of Jesus was in attendance. She may have had more to do with the ceremony than a mere invitee, as we notice her concern about their need of wine at some point in the feast. She knew the problem behind all the gimmicks, delay tactics and cover-up that was being employed by the ruler of the feast and the bridegroom. It was lack of wine! She knew that all their fuss and fumes were gone and they knew not what else to do to cover up their shame. In Igbo culture, marriage ceremony is called 'Igbankwu', which literally means

'carrying wine'. It would be a thing of shame for wine to finish at the middle of such a ceremony. Mary had no power or money, but she had access to Jesus- the source of all joy. She knew that Jesus could change the present situation and so she reported it to Him in the humblest of ways, "They have no more wine". Her mediation made Jesus to turn water into wine. There was wine in abundance, which was even more tasty than what they had prepared before Jesus came.

MARY'S DIVINE CONSENT (LUKE 1:38)

Mary's mediative role is also strongly connected to her consent to the divine will. Once Mary said 'Yes' to the Archangel Gabriel, she consented on our behalf, mediating between ourselves and God. Just as Eve's disobedience brought untold consequences upon mankind, Mary's consent was a response for the entire human race, and through her Yes-obedience, mankind was restored to grace. Eve and Mary are two examples of mediators: while Eve's mediation brought death and enmity, Mary's mediation brought life and friendship with God. If they were not mediators, then their decisions would not have had consequences on the future of all humanity. Irenaeus (A.D. 120–200) wrote:

As by a virgin the human race had been bound to death, by a virgin it is saved, the balance being preserved, a virgin's disobedience by a virgin's obedience⁸.

While Eve made the Fall possible, Mary made our Redemption possible by consenting to bring the Savior into the world. At the moment when she said: "Behold the hand maid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your Word" (Lk 1:38), her consent had a resounding consequence on the restoration of grace to the whole of mankind.

⁸*Against Heresies*, 3, 22, 19

'HAIL FULL OF GRACE' ANF ACCESS TO GRACE

Why do we use the word “Mediatrice of all Graces”? It sounds as though she is equated with God- but that is not so; as though she has access to all graces- but that is true. When we read through the Scripture, precisely the gospel of Luke, in the story of the visitation of the Archangel Gabriel, when he came to her, he greeted her: “Hail, Full of Grace”(Luke 1:28). The fact that she is full of grace implies that all graces are available in her. If Mary were not full of grace, then the Archangel would not have referred to her thus, and if she is full of grace, it then means that she has all the graces available to her. When God's messenger addressed her as such, it speaks of the

special place that she occupies in the divine scheme- no human being born of a woman in Scripture and outside the Scripture has ever been spoken of in these words. If she is full of grace, then she can be the Mediatrix of all Graces.

MARY'S COOPERATION IN THE WORK OF SALVATION

When Adam and Eve fell from grace, and God promised restoration of grace to mankind, He began by making reference to the woman through whom grace would be restored. He said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman" (Gen 3:15); it is through the woman that grace would be restored to mankind. At the incarnation, Mary played a fundamental role. She conceived Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and gave birth to Him, and took care of Him. She suffered with Him as He died on the cross; she, therefore, cooperated in the work of the Saviour in an altogether singular way, by obedience, faith, hope, and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls. If God in all His

wisdom decided to come to us through her, why should I in all my ignorance not go through her to God?

No human being on earth suffered with Jesus in the same manner that she did. Pope Benedict XV taught that:

... the fact that she was with Him crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. For with her suffering and dying Son, Mary endured suffering and almost death. She gave up her Mother's rights over her Son to procure the salvation of mankind, and to appease the divine justice, she, as much as she could, immolated her Son, so that one can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race. But if for this reason, every kind of grace we receive from the treasury of the redemption is ministered as it were through the hands of the same

Sorrowful Virgin, everyone can see that a holy death should be expected from her, since it is precisely by this gift that the work of the Redemption is effectively and permanently completed in each one ... further, there is a most constant belief among the faithful, proved by long experience, that as many as employ the same Virgin as Patron, will not at all perish forever⁹.

She alone, being perfectly obedient to the will of God, uniquely endured the intensity of Jesus' suffering by lovingly consenting to the sacrifice of her Son, the Paschal Lamb. Further, she associated herself with Jesus' sacrifice in her heart, which points to the reality of her direct participation in the sacrifice at Calvary. It is on this account that she is the one able to distribute the graces of Calvary, namely, she aided in their acquisition¹⁰.

⁹ *Litterae Apostolicae, Inter Sodalicia, 182.*

¹⁰ Sheeben, Mariology, 265.

Her mediatory role persists even after her assumption into heaven. According to the Second Vatican Council Document:

For after being assumed into heaven, she has not put aside this saving function, but by her manifold intercession, she continues to win the gifts of eternal salvation for us. By her motherly love, she takes care of the brothers of her Son who are still in pilgrimage and in dangers and difficulties, until they be led through to the happy fatherland. For this reason, the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adiutrix, and Mediatrix. This however it to be so understood that it takes nothing away, or adds nothing to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator¹¹.

¹¹Lumen Gentium, 60-61

There is a legend that of all the apostles, St Andrew had the greatest devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. After she was assumed into heaven, he missed her very dearly. When he died and went up to heaven, the first question he asked St Peter was the where about of our Lady. Peter replied that he didn't know. St Andrew then searched all through heaven but did not find her. She was not in her mansion and no one could tell where she was. He then went to Jesus and enquired from Him. Jesus said to him, "You will not find Mary here in heaven! She has been on earth helping people there". As a mother she mediates between heaven and earth. This explains why she is called the Mediatrix of all Graces.

As Pope Pius XII prayed, 'May she, then, the most holy Mother of all the members of Christ, ask earnestly that most abundant streams of graces from the

lofty Head may flow down on all the members of the Mystical body without interruption'.

Stay of the falling,	pray for us!
Uplifter of the fallen,	pray for us!
Cheer and comfort of the dying,	pray for us!
Peace and joy of mankind,	pray for us!
Our life, our sweetness and our hope,	pray for us!
Gate of Paradise,	pray for us!
Mystical stair of Jacob,	pray for us!
Key of the heavenly kingdom,	pray for us!
Channel of divine graces,	pray for us!
Throne of divine clemency,	pray for us!
Fountain of living waters,	pray for us!
Fountain sealed by the Holy Spirit,	pray for us!
Unfailing stream of mercy,	pray for us!
Asylum of the erring,	pray for us!
Haven of the shipwrecked,	pray for us!
Shining star of the sea,	pray for us!
Light of those who sit in darkness,	pray for us!
Chamber of spiritual nuptials,	pray for us!
Mediatrice of men with God,	pray for us!
Mediatrice after the Mediator,	pray for us!
Mediatrice reconciling us to the Son,	pray for us!
Mediatrice of sinners, staunch and true,	pray for us!
Mediatrice of all beneath the sky,	pray for us!
Mediatrice ever pleading for us,	pray for us!
Mediatrice set between Christ and His Church,	pray for us!
Mediatrice who hast found favor with God,	pray for us!
Mediatrice to win salvation for the world,	pray for us!
Mediatrice of the mysteries of God,	pray for us!
Mediatrice of all graces,	pray for us!
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world,	
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world,	Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world,	Graciously hear us,
	O Lord.
	Have mercy on us.

- V. Pray for us, our powerful
Mediatrix,
R. That we may be made worthy
of the promises of Christ!

Let us Pray

O Lord Jesus Christ, our Mediator with the Father, Who hast deigned to appoint the Blessed Virgin, Thy Mother, to be our Mother also and our Mediatrix with Thee, graciously grant that whosoever goes to Thee in quest of blessings may be gladdened by obtaining them all through her, Thou Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. R. Amen.

Prayer of Petition

O Ever-Virgin Mother of God and Mediatrix of Grace who art the House of Gold within which dwells thy Son, our Mediator, Jesus Christ, we humbly beseech thee to grant our requests for our salvation and the salvation of the

entire world. (*Here pause and make your requests*) Keep us close to the Vicar of thy Son in the unity of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. Hear our prayer and grant the requests we make to thee.

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