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## MARY IN FORMATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

The current *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, issued December 9, 2016, emphasized already in its introduction that “formation of seminarians is in a natural manner continued in the ongoing formation of priests and forms together with it a single entity.” This means that the main features of priestly identity and spirituality are the point of reference for, and the goal of, seminary formation.

The spiritual attitude of the priest should not be lacking in a filial reference to Mary. The Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Tota Ecclesia*, published January 31, 1994, by the same Congregation, calls attention to this: “Priestly spirituality could not be considered complete if it were to fail to include the message of Christ’s words on the Cross, in which He conferred his Mother to the beloved disciple, and, through him, to all priests called to continue his work of redemption” (n. 68).

Seminary formation, in its human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral aspects alike, should therefore include extensive reference to Mary. For as relevant Church documents—and especially the teaching of St. John Paul II—indicate, the figure of the Mother of God plays a far-reaching role in preparation for the priesthood

and in the very experience of this ministry. She does this by her presence itself, and by the mission which she carries out in salvation history<sup>1</sup>.

### **Review of post-conciliar Church teaching on the role of Mary in priesthood preparation**

The Second Vatican Council embedded Mariology within ecclesiology, which is reflected in chapter eight of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, with its eloquent title “Mary in the Mystery of Christ and the Church.” This makes it possible see the Marian dimension of priestly spirituality in a new light, and thus also the Marian aspects of seminary formation.

A reflection of this inter alia is the conciliar decree on priestly formation *Optatam Totius* (October 28, 1965). Point eight of this document, referring to the gospel scene beneath the cross, in which the dying Jesus entrusts his Mother to his beloved disciple, expresses the invitation that candidates to the priesthood should love and honour Mary with childlike trust. Meanwhile the conciliar decree on the ministry and life of priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (December 7, 1965), calling upon them to zealously fulfil their mission, points out, for example, “the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was led by the Holy Spirit to dedicate herself totally to the mystery of man’s redemption. Let priests love and venerate with filial devotion and veneration this mother of the Eternal High Priest, Queen of Apostles and Protector of their own ministry” (nr. 18).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. Maroney, *Seminary life and formation under Mary’s mantle: an exploration of Mary’s presence and mission in initial priestly formation*, Dayton 2019.

The final document of the Second Ordinary Synod of Bishops (June 30-November 6, 1971), dedicated among other things to the priestly ministry, also encourages the priest to frequently turn his gaze to Mary, the Mother of God, “who accepted the Word of God with perfect faith and intercedes daily for the grace of becoming like her Son” (II.1.3)<sup>2</sup>.

The first post-conciliar *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (March 19, 1985) states succinctly that it is essential that the priest “ferently love, in accordance with the spirit of the Church, the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, in a special way united with Him in the work of redemption” (nr. 54).

An exceptionally large amount of space is dedicated to the role of Mary in seminary formation in the letter of the Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation* (March 25, 1988) along with the attachment of nine official commentaries from the most prominent Mariologists of that time. This came out in the context of the announcement by St. John Paul II of the Marian Year (April 7, 1987 – August 15, 1988). The first section of the document catalogues the most important content of Mariology, presenting at the same time the whole doctrinal wealth of the Church from the Second Vatican Council up to John Paul II’s encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*. In this he presents the thesis that, “the history of theology confirms that understanding the mystery of the Virgin contributes to a more profound understanding of the mystery of Christ, of the Church, and of the vocation of man” (n. 18). The second part of the letter takes up the fundamental role of the Virgin Mary in the intellectual

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. Tábet, *Il sacerdozio di Cristo e il sacerdozio ministeriale nel Nuovo Testamento*, in: S. M. Manelli, S.M. Lanzetta (a cura di), *Il sacerdozio ministeriale: “l’amore del Cuore di Gesù”*, Casa Mariana, Frigento 2010, pp. 19–46.

and spiritual formation of Christians in general, and of candidates to the priesthood in particular. “Considering the importance of the Virgin in the history of salvation and in the life of the People of God, [...] it would be unthinkable that the teaching of Mariology be obscured today: it is necessary, therefore, that it be given its just place in seminaries and theology faculties” (n. 27). The teaching of Mariology therefore should be: organic, that is to say, appropriately included in theological studies plans; complete, which means taking into account the presence of Mary in the whole of salvation history and all dogmatic truths; and also adapted to the type of institution, depending on whether it is a seminary, theology department or institute, or a religious culture centre. “It is necessary, therefore, that every centre of theological study—according to its proper physiognomy—plan that in its *ratio studiorum* the teaching of Mariology be included, having the characteristics listed above; and, consequently, with the teachers of Mariology being properly qualified” (n. 30). The document also draws attention to the three modalities of treating with Mariology in theological centres, namely: research, teaching, and pastoral service. All of them “tend to promotion of the authentic Marian piety which should characterize the life of every Christian, especially those who are dedicated to theological studies and who are preparing for the priesthood (n. 33)<sup>3</sup>.

At the same time as the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education, St. John Paul II addressed a letter to priests around the world for Holy Thursday, entitled “With Mary beneath the cross,” in which—referring to the Marian Year then taking

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. McKenna, *New directions in Mariology within theology: Mary, Mother of God, Theotokos, type of the Church, illuminator of the fullness of Christian faith and theology*, “Theology” 119(2016), n. 3. pp. 185–192.

place—he made the words of Christ on the Cross addressed to his Mother and beloved disciple John the subject of reflection (Jn. 19:25–27). The Pope wrote that the apostle, taking into his home Mary, who had stood at the foot of the cross of her Son, “he also made his own all that was within her on Golgotha: the fact that she ‘suffered grievously with her only-begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart in his sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim that she herself had brought forth.’ All this—the superhuman experience of the sacrifice of our redemption, inscribed in the heart of Christ the Redeemer’s own Mother—was entrusted to the man who in the Upper Room received the power to make this sacrifice present through the priestly ministry of the Eucharist (n. 3).

The Holy Father returned to this topic in his Wednesday catechesis on April 30, 1993. Its content formed the “existential relationship” which exists between the Mother of Jesus and the priesthood of His followers. This results from the connection between the divine maternity of Mary and the priesthood of Christ. It is on this—in the pope’s view—upon which the Marian spirituality of every priest is based. Beginning with the statement that “in the life of the priest, devotion to the Mother of God constitutes an effective support on the path of sanctification, a continual strengthening in personal difficulties, and a source of great energy for the apostolate,” John Paul II pointed to the special bond between the ministerial priesthood and the Blessed Virgin Mary. From the moment of the annunciation, when she gave her *fiat*, she experienced the fullness of the mystery of Christ, and through her presence on Calvary, “she was uniquely incorporated into the priestly offering of Christ, because she shared His will for the salvation of the world through the cross.” By being “the first and most perfect spiritual participant” in Christ’s sacrifice as *Sacerdos et Hostia*, Mary became a model of readiness for priests “to be

ever more responsive to the demands of spiritual sacrifice that the priesthood presupposes”<sup>4</sup>.

Another reason for the bond between Mary and the priesthood is—according to the pope—her “new motherhood,” which Christ gave to her regarding the beloved disciple, saying, “Woman, behold your son” (Jn. 19:26). From the Last Supper, along with the other apostles, he was one of the first priests. In this manner Jesus desired “to establish the universal motherhood of Mary in the life of grace of each of the disciples of that time, and of their successors.” Saying at the same time to John, “Behold your Mother” (Jn. 19:27), Jesus entrusted him with the care of Mary. St. John Paul II notes that “these words gave rise to Marian devotion.” At the same time “it is telling that they were directed to a priest.” From this he concludes that every priest is called to spread and develop Marian devotion. It is he who is first and foremost responsible for this cult<sup>5</sup>.

In his account the Evangelist John states that, “from that hour the disciple took her into his home” (Jn. 19:27). And so, he responded immediately to the call of Christ; in this he showed the obedience and fidelity proper to the priest. “For every priest, ‘to take Mary to himself’—as the pope taught in this catechesis—means to make room for her in his own life, preserving a lasting attachment to her in his thoughts, feelings, and in zeal for the Kingdom of God and for her cult itself”.

The scene at the foot of the cross was a favourite meditation motif for John Paul II. For that reason, he refers to this scene,

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<sup>4</sup> Instead of pointing to the example of Mary in priestly spirituality, contemporary feminist theology puts a greater accent on the ancient idea of the priesthood of the Mother of God, sometimes presented on pontifical vestments—Cf. A. Kateusz, *She sacrificed herself as the priest. Early Christian Female and Male Co-Priests*, “Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion” 33(2017), n. 1, 45–67.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J.E. Bifet, *María en el itinerario de la formación, de la vida y del ministerio sacerdotal*, “Estudios marianos” 77(2011). pp. 189–211.

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among other emphases, in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, on priestly formation in the contemporary world, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (March 25, 1992). He states in the document's conclusion that "Every aspect of priestly formation can be referred to Mary, the human being who has responded better than any other to God's call. Mary became both the servant and the disciple of the Word to the point of conceiving, in her heart and in her flesh, the Word made man, so as to give him to mankind. Mary was called to educate the one eternal priest, who became docile and subject to her motherly authority. With her example and intercession, the Blessed Virgin keeps vigilant watch over the growth of vocations and priestly life in the Church. And so, we priests are called to have an ever firmer and more tender devotion to the Virgin Mary and to show it by imitating her virtues and praying to her often" (nr 82)<sup>6</sup>.

Against the background of the statements quoted here, it could be expected that the formation for priesthood proposed in the newest general *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* entitled "The gift of vocation to the priesthood," would take the Marian aspect into account to a great extent. This document however merely mentions the need for Mariological studies and taking up the practice of Marian devotion. While laconically repeating with John Paul II that, "every aspect of priestly formation can be referred to Mary, the human being who has responded better than any other to God's call" (n. 112; comp. PDV 82), the *ratio fundamentalis* reduces the Marian aspect of formation to a simple encouragement to seminarians to cultivate an authentic and filial devotion to the Virgin Mary, mainly through recitation of the Rosary and the prayer of the Angelus. Yet there is no analysis

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. P. Maciaszek, *The role of Mary in the life of a priest*, „*Studia Pastoralne*” 2012, n. 8, pp. 254–258.



or description of this dimension at least to the extent of what was discussed about human formation, where much attention has been paid, *inter alia*, to various psychological issues.

The development of a Marian paradigm for the formation of future priests remains an urgent task to be carried out as part of national *ratio institutionis sacerdotalis*, taking into account the specific character of the local Church and cultural conditions<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this task has still not been taken up. For example, the document of the Italian Bishops Conference, authorized by the Congregation for Catholic Education, entitled *La formazione dei presbiteri nella Chiesa italiana. Orientamenti e norme per i seminari (terza edizione)* of September 8, 2006, there is only a general mention of the priest's need for Marian devotion (n. 83). The Spanish Episcopal Conference published a document on May 28, 2018, entitled *La formación permanente de los sacerdotes según la „Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis”* in which the name of Mary is not mentioned even once. Similarly, the *Ratio institutionis sacerdotalis pro Polonia* entitled „Droga formacji prezbiterów w Polsce” [Formation Path for Priests in Poland], approved by the Congregation for the Clergy on April 10, 2021, apart from a few notes of general interest, practically does not deal with the role of the Mother of God in preparation for the priesthood. It states only—following the conciliar decree *Optatam Totius* (n. 8)—that seminarians “need devotion to the Mother of God and the saints, which leads to a life according to the Gospel (to attitudes of faith, hope and love, a spirit of prayer, the acquisition of Christian virtues and missionary zeal)” (n. 290). At the stage of becoming like Christ, which is a time of intense study of the mystery of the Church and the evangelical way of life, “contemplation and imitation of the Mother of God are an important support in this process” (n. 306). As for lectures on Mariology in conjunction with theology of grace and ecclesiology, a total of 45 contact hours and no more than 55 hours of the student's own work are devoted to it, and yet the content of these lectures is to include the following issues: Mary in the Holy Scriptures, outline history of Mariology, Marian dogmas, the dignity and holiness of Mary, the spiritual motherhood of Mary, and theological foundations for devotion to Mary (cf. n. 506). It does not however seem possible that such a broad range of content can be conveyed in this quite limited timeframe.

## **Mary as model in the formation of priests**

Some general indications as to how the Marian aspect of priestly spirituality should look on the levels of basic and of permanent formation can be found in point 68 of the directory on the ministry and life of priests *Tota Ecclesia*. This is an excellent synthesis of the post-conciliar teaching of the Church on the topic of the Marian character of the priesthood and therefore deserves attention.

In recalling the gospel scene at the foot of the cross (cf. Jn. 19:25–27), which in the Church documents referenced above forms the basis for the Marian dimension of priestly spirituality, this document states that, “Priests, who are among the favoured disciples of Jesus, crucified and risen, should welcome Mary as their Mother in their own life, bestowing her with constant attention and prayer. The Blessed Virgin then becomes the Mother who leads them to Christ, who makes them sincerely love the Church, who intercedes for them and who guides them toward the Kingdom of Heaven” (TE n. 68).

This objective aspect of Mary’s motherhood towards the priest is deepened in its indication of the need for a personal reference to the Mother of Jesus. “Every priest knows that Mary, as Mother, is also the most distinguished modeler of his priesthood, since it is she who moulds the priestly soul, protects it from danger, from routine and discouragement, and maternally safeguards it, so he may grow in wisdom, years, and grace, before God and men (cf. Lk 2:40)” (TE n. 68).

But a psychological and emotional relationship of the priest to Mary is not enough on its own. A filial attitude towards her should be expressed primarily in imitating the attitude of Mary. For this reason, priests “are not devout sons if they do not know how to imitate the virtues of Mary. The priest will look to Mary to be

a humble, obedient and chaste minister and to give testimony of charity in the total surrender to God and to the Church” (TE n. 68)<sup>8</sup>.

The identity of the priest has an ecclesial dimension, so his personal tie to the Mother of God ceases to be a matter of his own personal piety, since “Masterpiece of the priestly Sacrifice of Christ, the Blessed Virgin represents the Church in the purest way, ‘with neither stain nor blemish,’ completely ‘holy and immaculate’ (Eph 5:27). This contemplation of the Blessed Virgin places before the priest the ideal to which the ministry in his community should lead, so that this be a ‘wholly glorious Church’ (ibid.) through the priestly gift of his very life” (TE n. 68).

In this quotation from the *Tota Ecclesia* directory we find first the reasoning behind Marian devotion among priests, which in essence consists in taking Mary as one’s spiritual mother and as a model to follow. This is to be expressed by keeping attention on her and the practice of various forms of prayer, in particular the rosary. The fundamental reason for the bond of priests with the Mother of God is that, first of all, she “leads them to Christ,” then “teaches them authentic love for the Church,” and finally “intercedes for them and leads them to the Kingdom of Heaven.” Accordingly, we can speak of three reasons justifying the Marian formation of priests: Christological, ecclesiological, and redemptive-eschatological. It now becomes appropriate to consider them in relation to each other.

Both the candidate to the priesthood and the priest himself, who should conform himself daily more and more to Christ, the Head and Shepherd of the Church (cf. PDV n. 15) and serve the Church and love her as the Mystical Body of the Savior, find valuable help by imitating Mary. For she through her *fiat* is completely

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. E. de Moulins-Beaufort, *Marie dans la vie et dans la formation des prêtres*. “Vies consacrées” 83(2011), pp. 11–27.

immersed in the mystery of Christ and the Church. From her the priest also learns his dedication to the work of redemption, which is the fundamental reason for his vocation and mission (cf. PO n. 18). Mary as model, therefore, plays a significant role in the process of his formulation into Christ, that is, the internal conforming of the priest to his Master and Lord, which is crucial for the spiritual life of the Christian (cf. Gal. 4:19)<sup>9</sup>.

In this regard, St. John Paul II in his Letter for Holy Thursday 1995 entitled “The importance of women in the life of the priest” weaves theological reflections important from the standpoint of formation. Referring to the events of the Last Supper, which “for us, as priests, is an especially holy moment” due to the institution of the sacrament of priesthood, the pope points out that, “this is an *eminently Christocentric moment*: for we receive the priesthood from Christ the Priest [...] But as we think of the sacrifice of the Body and Blood, which we offer *in persona Christi*, we find it difficult not to recognize therein the presence of the Mother. Mary gave life to the Son of God so that he might offer himself, even as our mothers gave us life, that we too, through the priestly ministry, might offer ourselves in sacrifice together with Him” (n. 3). Continuing in this vein, the pope notes that the Eucharistic Bread, which by consecration in the hands of the priest becomes the Body of Christ, is also the Body of Mary, as expressed in the words of the liturgical hymn: *Ave, verum Corpus, natum de Maria Virgine*. John Paul II returned to this thread many times in his teaching. For example, in his apostolic letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, published on the occasion of the Year of the Eucharist (October 7, 2004), he wrote that, “[...] in the Sacrament of the Eucharist the

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. V. de Paolis, *Maria Santissima nel Cammino di Formazione e di Santificazione del Sacerdote*. “Immaculata Mediatrix: Rivista Internazionale di Teologia Mariana” 8(2008), pp. 68–88.

Savior, who took flesh in Mary's womb twenty centuries ago, continues to offer Himself to humanity as the Source of divine life" (n. 7). Elsewhere in this document, we read, "The Eucharistic Bread which we receive is the spotless flesh of her Son" (n. 31).

Benedict XVI wrote similarly in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* on the Eucharist, source and summit of the life and mission of the Church (February 22, 2007). There we read that "Consequently, every time we approach the Body and Blood of Christ in the eucharistic liturgy, we also turn to her who, by her complete fidelity, received Christ's sacrifice for the whole Church" (n. 33). Indeed, she „inaugurates the Church's participation in the sacrifice of the Redeemer," because, as the Immaculate one, she "receives God's gift unconditionally and is thus associated with His work of salvation. Mary of Nazareth, icon of the nascent Church, is the model for each of us, called to receive the gift that Jesus makes of Himself in the Eucharist" (ibid.). It follows that "the filial relationship of the priest with Mary, Mother of priests, helps him to live the Eucharist with greater awareness and commitment, which is the fundamental reason for his mission"<sup>10</sup>.

It is obvious that the personal relationship of a Catholic priest with the Mother of God, who was "full of grace" (cf. Lk 1:28), directly serves his sanctification. This is indicated by the Church documents on priestly formation discussed earlier, and is confirmed by countless examples of blessed and saints who were ministers of the altar. As the Catholic hagiography shows, priest-saints have always been characterized by outstanding devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It is fitting, then, that the directory of John Paul II calls her "the best educator of our priesthood" (PDV n. 82).

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Benedict D. O'Cinnsealaigh, *The Relationship Between the Blessed Virgin Mary and Christ's Priests*. "Josephinum Journal of Theology" 11(2004), pp. 235–244.

Another significant trait of holy Marian priests is that they typically have an admirable commitment to the apostolate, which is an expression of their love for the Church. The conferral upon Mary of the title of Mother of the Church, which St. Paul VI carried out at the end of the third session of the Second Vatican Council (November 21, 1964), is of momentous importance for priestly formation in the field of apostolic commitment. Priests learn obedience to the will of God, as well as service, which is to be indicative of their position, from her who responded to the Annunciation with her generous *fiat* (cf. Lk 1:38) and then went in haste to minister to her cousin Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39). After all, the priesthood of Christ in the Church is by nature a ministerial priesthood<sup>11</sup>.

This attitude is related in turn with the priest's docility to the Holy Spirit. In speaking of the pneumatological dimension of the priesthood, the directory *Tota Ecclesia* states that having received the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of holy orders, the priest "knows that he will never lose the presence and the effective power of the Holy Spirit" (n. 8). A great aid to him in this respect is the example of Mary, whom the Second Vatican Council calls *sacrarium Spiritus Sancti* (LG 53). Immaculate, and thus completely free from the consequences of original sin due to her anticipated divine maternity, she conceived by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35) and was filled by Him again along with the Church keeping vigil in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:4). She is therefore a model for priests of docility to the inspirations of the Paraclete. Her influence as Pneumataphora, then, protects also his state of sanctifying grace<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. S.M. Perrella, *La Madre del Signore nella formazione al sacerdozio ministeriale: tra storia, teologia, attualità*, "Madre della Chiesa" 2010, p. 161-282.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. Bonarrigo, *Maria sposa dello Spirito Santo nella teologia contemporanea*, Siena 2018.

It is worthwhile in this context to give attention to the role of the Word of God both in preparation for the priesthood and in pastoral ministry, as Benedict XVI recalled in his exhortation *Verbum Domini* (September 30, 2010). The pope refers to Mary there as “*Mater Verbi*” (n. 124). For her listening to the Word of God (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), which is the result of the action of the Holy Spirit within her, should be an important inspiration for shaping priestly spirituality, which is also emphasized in Church documents on priestly formation.

Apart from the points of dogma discussed above, shown in the *Tota Ecclesia* Directory as essential for the Marian path of the priest’s life, existential and affective points are no less significant. This document states, therefore, that Mary “knows how to form the priest’s heart, protect it from dangers, fatigue, discouragement...” and also watches over him, that his integral development is accomplished<sup>13</sup>.

Much space is devoted in ascetic literature to the role of the Mother of God in the formation and self-formation of the priest in emotional maturity and the life of celibacy. St. Paul VI called attention to this also in his encyclical *Sacerdotalis Coelibatus* (June 24, 1967) (cf. bis, 45 and 98), as did St. John Paul II in the abovementioned 1995 Holy Thursday letter to priests. He writes in this, inter alia, that “If the priest, with the help of divine grace and under the special protection of Mary, Virgin and Mother, gradually develops such an attitude towards women [as sisters and mothers], he will see his ministry met by a sense of great trust

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. P. Messa, *Rapporto tra la libertà e maturità affettiva nel celibato consacrato e la familiarità affettiva con Maria: appunti per una riflessione*, “*Antonianum*” 80(2005), pp. 345–348.

precisely on the part of women whom he regards, in the variety of their ages and life situations, as sisters and mothers” (n. 5)<sup>14</sup>.

However, the question of the influence of Mary on the affective life of a seminarian and priest as a man should not be approached solely in psycho-pedagogical terms, bearing in mind, *inter alia*, what is known as transfer of feelings. A healthy, mature personality of a priest in terms of his relationship with women is shaped primarily in the plane of living faith, which is expressed in prayer, especially the rosary, and in various forms of Marian devotion. It is however important that their practice take into account the norms set out by St. Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (February 2, 1974). The pope warns there against a fatal deformation in the form of shallow sentimentality (cf. n. 38), from which priests, also, are not free.

In this connection, it is worthwhile to give attention to the abovementioned words of the *Tota Ecclesia* directory, where we find clear indication that the filial bond of the priest to Mary is not to be expressed so much in feelings as in, above all, the imitation of her virtues, among which service, humility, and chastity take precedence. This was aptly expressed by St. John Paul II in his abovementioned letter of Holy Thursday, 1995, in which, alluding to the scene of the annunciation (Lk. 1:38) he writes, “The relationship of priests to women as mothers and sisters is enriched, thanks to the Marian tradition, by another aspect: that of service in imitation of Mary the Handmaid. If the priesthood is by its nature ministerial, we must live it in union with the Mother who is the Handmaid of the Lord. Then our priesthood will be kept safe in her hands, indeed in her heart, and we shall be able to

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. J. Cihak, *The Blessed Virgin Mary's Role in the Celibate Priest's Spousal and Paternal Love*, „Sacrum ministerium” 15 (2009), pp. 149–164.



open it to everyone. In this way our priesthood, in all its dimensions, will be fruitful and salvific” (n. 8)<sup>15</sup>.

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As can be seen from this analysis, the inclusion of Marian devotion in initial and ongoing priestly formation is not a purely optional matter but forms part of the very identity of the priest. Moreover, one can speak of not only of the Marian dimension of the priest, but also of the Marian dimension of priestly spirituality. For the presence of Mary as both model and mother is perceptible in all aspects of the identity and life of the Catholic priest.

Although she plays an important role in the life of the Catholic priest as a model for him with respect to God the Father, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church, we do not find, however—as has been noted—any in-depth content on this subject in the documents of the Magisterium of the Church on priestly formation.

It would be necessary, therefore, according to the personal development of the seminarian and his progressive intellectual formation, to ensure that his spiritual as well as his pastoral formation be saturated with Marian content, taking into account both the sound Christological and ecclesiological Mariology of the Council, and local conditions and pious traditions<sup>16</sup>.

In accordance with the directives contained in the latest *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* and other Church documents, all formators are also responsible for this dimension of seminary formation, including spiritual directors as well as seminary

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. Bartosik, *Maria, madre e modello per i sacerdoti del XXI secolo*, “Miles immaculatae: rivista di cultura mariana e di formazione kolbiana” 46(2010), pp. 8–30.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. A. Martinelli, *Maria nella formazione teologico-pastorale del futuro sacerdote*, „Seminarium” 15 (1975), pp. 656–679.

educators and lecturers. Marian formation should take place in close conjunction with the study of Mariology, personal prayer, and liturgical and sacramental life, along with the acquisition of pastoral experience.

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