



# Adsum

*Adsum* is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

## LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

---

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

This month of August is highlighted by two very significant feasts in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary: the Assumption and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

As we honor the Mother of God, let us remember that our love and devotion to her is solidly founded on Sacred Scripture and Tradition. In the Gospel of St. Luke, we find multiple passages in reference to Mary. In the first reference we read the words of the Angel Gabriel to Mary: *“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.”* (Luke 1:28) Later on, St. Elizabeth *“was filled with the Holy Ghost and cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.’”* (Luke 1:42) In response to St. Elizabeth’s praise, the Blessed Virgin answered: *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior... for behold henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”* (Luke 1:48) As Catholics, we fulfill this prophecy as the Catholic Church has done in every age.

Further in the Gospel of St. Luke, we read *“a certain woman from the crowd lifted up her voice and said to Him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the breasts that nursed Thee.’ But He said, ‘Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.’”* (Luke 11:27-28) Here Jesus Christ reaffirmed that His Mother was indeed blessed, especially because



she heard the word of God and most faithfully kept it. We see this in the following passages:

1) Mary’s response to the Angel Gabriel: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.”* (Luke 1:38)

2) St. Luke’s reference on two occasions, after the birth of Jesus: *“Mary kept in mind all these things, pondering them in her heart.”* (Luke 2:19) and after the finding of Jesus in the temple: *“His mother kept all these things carefully in her heart.”* (Luke 2:52)

3) St. Elizabeth’s declaration to Mary at the time of the visitation: *“And blessed is she who has believed, because the things promised her by the Lord shall be accomplished.”* (Luke 1:45)

When we consider these Scriptural passages, it makes us wonder how Protestants can question the Catholic practice of devotion to Mary.

Even in Genesis, the very first book of the Bible, Almighty God foretold the role of Mary, the Mother of God. God spoke to Satan: *“I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush thy head.”* (Genesis 3:15) Writing in Hebrew, Moses, the author of Genesis, joined the feminine pronoun “HI,” i.e. *she*, with the masculine verb “ASCUPH,” *shall crush*, in order to show that the woman (Mary), by and through her seed (Christ), would crush Satan’s head. For this reason, Our Lord called His Mother “woman” on two occasions: at the wedding feast of Cana where He worked His first

public miracle at her request (John 2:1-12) and from the cross where He gave His Mother to His disciple (John 19:27).

When we look to the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, we find the same praise and devotion for the Blessed Virgin that has continued in every century of Christianity. As early as 100 A.D., St. Justin Martyr wrote two apologies for Christianity and referred to Mary: *"We know that the Son of God,... through means of the Virgin, became Man, so that the disobedience due to the serpent, might have its undoing after the same fashion that it had its beginning. For whereas Eve, yet a virgin and undefiled, through conceiving the word that came from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death—Mary the Virgin, possessed of faith and joy, when the Angel told her the good tidings... answered: Be it done unto me according to thy word."*

St. Irenaeus was born about the year 120 A.D. and was the disciple of St. Polycarp who was the disciple of St. John the Apostle. He eloquently wrote: *"The knot of Eve's disobedience obtained its unloosing through the obedience of Mary; for that which Eve a virgin bound by her unbelief, Mary a Virgin unbound by her faith."* And again: *"As Eve was seduced by an angel's word to shun God after she had transgressed His Word, so Mary, also by an Angel's word, had the glad tidings given her; that she might bear God, obeying His Word. And if the former had disobeyed God, yet the latter was persuaded to obey God, that Mary the Virgin might come to the rescue of the virgin Eve. And as the human race was bound to death by means of a virgin, it is saved by means of a Virgin; the poise of the balance being restored—a virgin's disobedience is saved by the obedience of a Virgin."*

The great Doctor of the Church St. Augustine, consecrated bishop in 395, wrote: *"With the exception of the holy Virgin Mary, touching whom, out of respect to our Lord, when we are on the subject of sins, I have no mind to entertain the question—for how are we to know what greater degree of grace was conferred, in order to vanquish sin in every respect, upon her who merited to conceive and bring forth Him whom all allow to have had no sin?"*

Finally, we can consider the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. when Pope St. Celestine I and the Bishops

condemned the errors of Nestorius and taught that Christ indeed was one Person (the second Person of the Blessed Trinity) with two natures, the Divine and the human, and that Mary can be truly honored with the title *Theotokos*, Mother of God.

What a glorious occasion was the definition of the dogma of the Assumption by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950, in the presence of 36 cardinals, 600 archbishops and bishops (including Bishop Peter Martin Thuc), thousands of priests and religious, and a crowd of 700,000 laity! Having traced the history of belief in Mary's Assumption and enumerated the testimonies from the liturgy, the teachings of the Church and the saints, and arguments from Sacred Scripture, Pope Pius XII solemnly defined: *"...for the glory of almighty God who has lavished His special affection upon the Virgin Mary, for the honor of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages and the Victor over sin and death, for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exaltation of the entire Church; by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."*

As we celebrate the glorious Assumption of Mary into Heaven on August 15, and the feast of her Immaculate Heart on August 22, let us renew our love, devotion, and consecration to her as a powerful means to persevere in these most difficult times. With all the problems in the world today, especially in West Africa with the Ebola virus, in the Middle East with the slaughter of Christians in northern Iraq by Moslem terrorists, and in the Ukraine with the conflict of the Russian rebels, the world in which we live is most unstable. And when we combine these troubles with the crisis in the Church and the widespread immorality in society, we can find consolation in the words of Our Lady of Fatima: *"My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God"* and *"in the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph."* With my prayers and blessing,  
Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI



*Fr. Johannes Heyne, from Germany, offers a Solemn High Mass on the occasion of his visit to Omaha*



*The blessing of St. Therese Catholic Church in Lebanon, Ohio*



*Girls' Summer Camp 2014*

# *Father Connell Answers Moral Questions*

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

---

## **Choosing a Particular Priest**

---

**Question:** Should a pastor allow his people to choose a particular priest to officiate at marriage, or rather insist that (apart from some very extraordinary reason) they accept the priest assigned to the ceremony, whether the pastor himself or one of the assistants? After twenty years of experience in the priesthood it seems to me that the former custom is not in conformity with the proper Catholic attitude. When there is need for any sacerdotal service our people should be trained to realize that the sublime power of the priesthood should predominate over the personal characteristics of the individual priest, and hence, in the matter of assistance at a marriage, as in the celebration of Mass or the distribution of Holy Communion, they should accept equally the services of any priest designated by the pastor. Am I correct in holding this opinion?

**Answer:** The principle on which our questioner bases his opinion is surely in accord with Catholic ideals. Catholics should look primarily to the supernatural dignity of their priests, and show themselves willing to accept the ministerial services of any priest their lawful ecclesiastical authorities may assign to provide for their spiritual welfare. To emphasize excessively the personal qualifications of their priests and to manifest their preferences very strongly on this basis is surely not a truly Catholic attitude. Thus, it is not in conformity with the Catholic spirit for the members of a congregation to make a protest to the Bishop when a priest whom they greatly esteem and love is assigned to another post. Similarly, to attend the Mass of one priest in preference to another because of merely personal liking indicates a failure to realize that it is Christ who is the principal priest in every Mass, and it is of little consequence who is the secondary priest.

On the other hand, there are certain sacred functions and offices in which the abilities and the personal traits of the individual priest can be taken into consideration without any violation of Catholic ideals. Thus, it is perfectly lawful for a person to choose a particular priest as his confessor because of his special understanding or kindness or ability as a director. And can we blame the lay Catholic who, given the choice, attends the sermon of a priest who manifests a more scholarly and inspiring way of presenting the doctrines of the Faith than one who does not take proper care to prepare himself for the important task of announcing the word of God?

In choosing a priest to officiate at a wedding or a funeral, it would not seem wrong for Catholics to manifest a preference based on reasonable grounds. Certainly, there would be no objection if a relative or old friend be requested for such occasions, or a priest to whom one of the interested parties had reason to be very grateful, such as the priest who was formerly a teacher of the young man entering marriage. Again, I would not consider it blameworthy if the bridal couple showed their preference for a certain priest because he conducts the marriage ceremony in a dignified and impressive manner and celebrates Mass more devoutly than the other priests of the parish. The wedding day is a memorable event in their lives, and they wish to be able to look back on it in the years to come with the recollection that the officiating priest contributed to it the full fervor and dignity of his sacred ministry, instead of rushing through the ceremony in an undignified and careless manner. However, I would agree with the questioner to the extent of admitting that it would not be a manifestation of the proper Catholic attitude if the choice was based merely on the prominence or the social graces of an individual priest.

---

*Adsum*, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

**MATER DEI SEMINARY**  
7745 Military Avenue  
Omaha NE 68134-3356