

# On Marian Consecration: an Introduction

by Fr. Giacinto Dagesse

To prepare ourselves well for Marian consecration, it is good to study its roots, as well as its practice. First we must plant and, then, provide water for growth. Thus, it will be important to learn what consecration actually is and how Our Lady herself was consecrated to each of the Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity. She is, according to St. Maximilian, the perfect “Complement of the Trinity.”<sup>1</sup> How glorious this title is, and how little known! We can make it better known by living out our Marian consecration as perfectly as possible. As one true spouse of Christ has so beautifully put it: “to become His love in this world.”

How are we to do this? There remains an entire “second page” yet to be written on this score. Let us now begin to begin. After first studying Our Lady’s thrice-holy life of consecration, we will then look at why and how we are to consecrate ourselves to her. Last, we’ll turn our gaze upon the blessed seraphim, those six-winged celestial beings, all ablaze with divine love. They image for us, in a particularly vivid way, a most perfect likeness to the Immaculate. May the angelic choirs guide us (and guard us) along our path: this Marian itinerary to divine love.

## WHAT IS CONSECRATION?

Consecration is “the dedication of a thing or person to divine service by a prayer or blessing” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), Glossary). Strictly speaking, God alone “consecrates,” because God alone can

1 For an exposition on this title of Our Lady, cf. P. D. Fehlner, F.L., *St. Maximilian M. Kolbe, Martyr of Charity—Pneumatologist: His Theology of the Holy Spirit* (New Bedford, MA: Academy of the Immaculate, 2004), pp. 90-102.

The word “consecration” means to be set apart for God alone and entirely for his purposes. It is love, divinely expressed by one’s life of abandonment to the will of God for the sole reason of bringing all men to Christ. Marian consecration, therefore, becomes a more perfect extension and manifestation of God’s love in the world.



Detail, *The Annunciation*, Nicolás Poussin, circa 1655-1657, National Gallery, London, UK

set us apart to serve him. It’s entirely his initiative, his call. This first part is an *objective consecration*. Really, it’s a marriage proposal made to us by God. And how ardently he awaits our response! The Sacred Heart says to each one of us personally, “How I thirst to be loved by you!” Such is the humility of divine love. Our response to him is a *subjective consecration*: a personal appropriation of God’s call—we make it our own—through a deliberate and free consent. We give our yes: an obedience of faith, a *fiat*.

Consecration is, therefore, essen-

tially a spousal relationship between Creator and creature. We participate, become immersed, in the pure relations of the Blessed Trinity, the “external exchange of love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (CCC, 221). And this happens by degrees. For example, Baptism is the most fundamental of all consecrations. It is the first immersion. And, *for those who can accept it*, consecrated life is a more radical deepening of one’s baptismal consecration. The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are like three nails with which religious affix themselves to the Cross with Jesus as spouse. Listen to one who knows from experience, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross:

All who want to be married to the Lamb must allow themselves to be fastened to the Cross with Him. Everyone marked by the Blood of the Lamb is called to this, and that means all the baptized. But not everyone understands the call and follows it. There is a call to following more closely, that resounds more urgently in the soul, and demands a clear answer. This is the vocation to the religious life, and the answer is the religious vows (*Collected Works*, IV, III.3).

So, initially, for all the baptized there is a *universal call to holiness*. And this brings us to union with our Crucified Lord. But there is also a more radical call, given to some (not to all), to really “nail down” their resolve to stay with Jesus on the Cross. And this is consecrated life.

But what about Marian consecration? How does this fit in?



## WHAT IS MARIAN CONSECRATION?

Consecration is all about serving God. But when we practice Marian consecration, we consecrate ourselves to a creature, to another human person. Why is this possible? Well, it has everything to do with Mary being the perfect Complement of the Blessed Trinity. She is the Mediatrix of All Graces. Her will, her being, and her very person are so united to God that, by serving her as slave, by belonging to her as her possession and property, we serve God most perfectly—just like she did as *the handmaid of the Lord*. But there is one crowning goal to all Marian consecration, whatever stripe. And that is, in the words of St. Maximilian M. Kolbe, to be *transubstantiated into the Immaculate*<sup>2</sup> to become identified with her who is the summit of all created love. Again: to become the love of God in this world.

It has been said that the deepest yearning of the human heart is to become a gift for the other: to be like Our Lord, so hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament—so utterly *for you*. How beautiful and true! In Marian consecration we identify with one who, like her Spouse, the Holy Spirit, is the Gift *par excellence*. Our Lady is the *Donum Gratiae*, the Gift of Grace for the whole world. To become this “gift” is actually the goal of evangelical poverty. Oftentimes, when we think of poverty, we think only in terms of what is lost, what we give up. But the whole logic of poverty is to enable us to become *ourselves* the gift: to be able to give away even oneself. Only the absolute poverty of the Immaculate can enable us to do this—to be totally *for* the other: first God and then neighbor. In fact, the titles “Immaculate Conception” and “Lady Poverty” are really just two sides of the same coin. Immaculate Conception refers to her

2 Cf. J. Fleischmann, “Transubstantiation into the Immaculate,” *Missio Immaculatae International*, vol. 10, no. 5 (September / October 2014), pp. 23-26.



Detail from a window in St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Kentucky.  
Courtesy of Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.

being *from* God, whereas Lady Poverty involves her being *for* God.

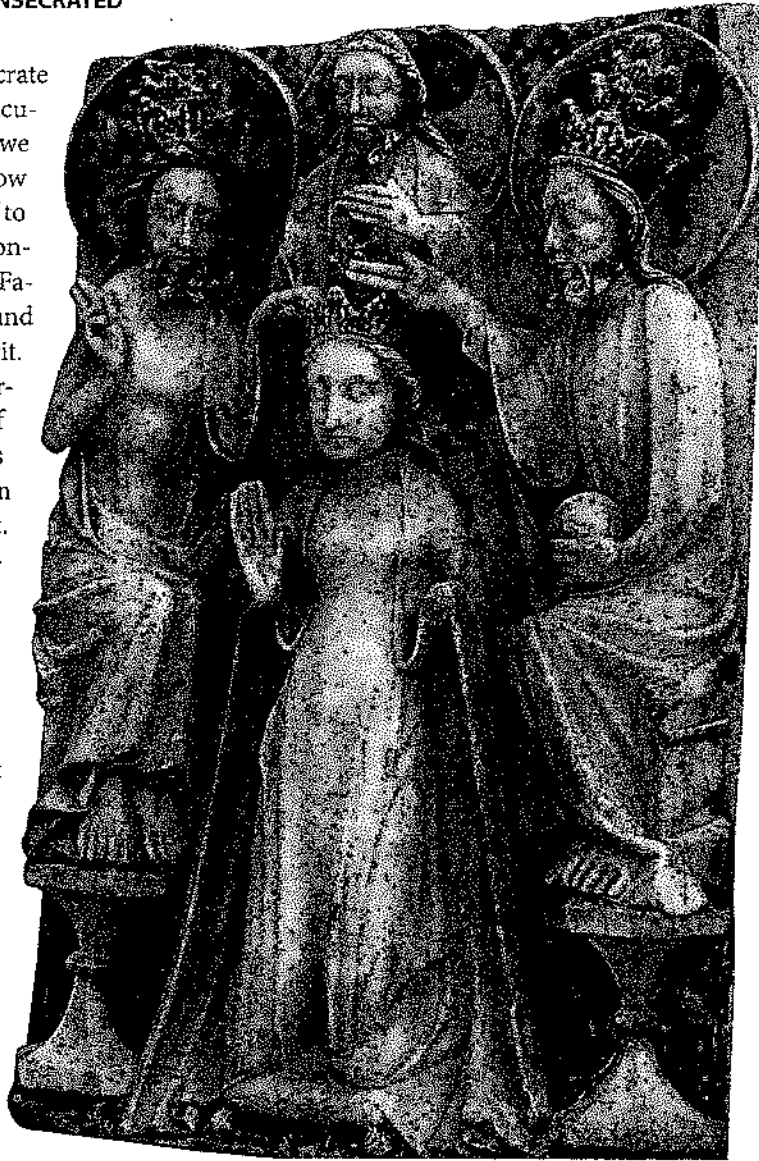
### HOW WAS MARY CONSECRATED TO GOD?

If we are to consecrate ourselves to the Immaculate, then, first off, we must come to know how she consecrated herself to God. Our Lady was consecrated to God the Father, to God the Son, and to God the Holy Spirit. Because she is the perfect Complement of the Blessed Trinity, this threefold consecration of hers is most perfect. The underlying *objective consecration*—God's all-embracing initiative in her life—is the grace of the Immaculate Conception. This is the baseline, not only of her existence, but also of the threefold consecration that she made to each of the Divine Persons.

Our Lady's first response was to the Holy Spirit, her Spouse. And this response was fittingly spousal. She made a vow to God of perpetual virginity, from the earliest dawning of her reason. It was simply connatural to her, as the Immaculate Conception, to express herself, her whole being, as gift. And this was the first gift she made of herself to God—a gift of charity to the Holy Spirit as Virgin and Spouse. *Love is patient, love is kind...*

Our Lady's second response was to God the Son. And the response here was maternal. Consenting to become the Mother of God, she said, *Be it done unto me according to thy word*. Her free and unconditional yes was possible, again, only because she

is the Immaculate Conception. We, on the other hand, sadly, often make concessions.



This medieval alabaster of the Holy Trinity crowning Our Lady is in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, UK. Courtesy of Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.

We hold back from giving ourselves fully to God because of our sinfulness and lack of trust. But the Virgin Mary made a total gift of self for the Son, now her Son. He assumed His Sacred Humanity from her immaculate flesh. Let us also marvel at how intimately united Our Lady is to the Gift of the Holy Eucharist. To God the Son she effectively said, *This is my body, which will be given up for you*.

Our Lady's third response was

to God the Father. And this response was made in union with her Son on Calvary. She continued her maternal *fiat* at the Annunciation, even unto the death of her Son. This is her coredemptive response. With this unwavering *fiat* she became the Coredeмпtrix. And what does it mean to be Coredeмпtrix? What does it mean to be Redeemer? When we say that Jesus is our Redeemer, we mean that He personally paid the price of our salvation. And with what currency did He purchase us? With His own life, to be sure. But, more specifically, it was the currency of divine charity: something called *merits* and *satisfactions*. These correspond to the eternal value of love; they are the marrow of an eternal offering. Here we enter into the heart of Marian consecration. We give all merits and satisfactions to Our Lady. As Coredeмпtrix, she offered hers in union with her crucified Son.

Now we see what we are entering into: sacrifice, a great deal of sacrifice. Yet the soul and spirit of the Immaculate will come to live so fully in the

soul consecrated to her that Christ's Light will shine right through that soul. Our Lord Jesus will be magnificently magnified. The return? Great sanctity! How else are we to become His love in this world?

To sum up, then, Marian consecration is a pledge (it can also be a vow) to stand with the Mother by the Cross of her Son. It's a marriage of compassion, an alliance of hearts. In classical, ascetical-mystical language, one might call it a first-deposit toward the transforming union. In the unspoken language of the heart... it's our way to heaven on earth.