THE WOMAN NAMED MARY

by Rev. Louis P. Rogge, O.Carm.

The New Testament is fundamentally the inspired record of how the early Christian community came to understand more and more fully the person of Jesus and the Good News he came to proclaim. It describes how—according to Jesus’ own promise—the Holy Spirit gave the first disciples of the Lord a growing awareness of the significance of all that Jesus had said and done.

Jesus had promised that, upon his own return to the Father, he would send the Spirit who would be with his disciples until the end of time. The Spirit, Jesus said, would continue to remind his followers of Jesus’ words and deeds. It was not that the Holy Spirit would add to what Jesus himself had revealed, but that he would guide the followers of Jesus to an ever deepening understanding both of that revelation and of its application to the changing circumstances believers would encounter down through the ages. The New Testament itself contains examples of this process. Thus, for example, although many of the Jerusalem community described in the early chapters of Acts had been present at Jesus’ ascension and had themselves heard his final command “to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea

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—19—
and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the Earth (Act 1:8), it was only after persecution broke out that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they began to spread the Gospel even as far as Samaria (Act 8:1-5); and it was only after a pair of visions and a sovereign act of God (Act 10) that, again under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they were convinced that when Jesus said "to the ends of the earth" he really did mean to include "all the nations" in his church (Lk. 10:1-11:18; cf. Mt. 28:19).

Nineteen centuries later we are still experiencing the vital guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are, I believe, under the guidance of the Spirit of Jesus, continuing to plumb the infinite mysteries revealed by Jesus; we are continuing to learn the significance of that revelation for our own time and place. If we have not been completely blind, if we have opened our ears however slightly, by God's grace we do understand more about these mysteries than did our fathers, and we can fully expect that the next generation will have an even deeper grasp of their significance.

Ten years ago which of us dreamed that the Society for Pentecostal Studies would have welcomed a paper by Roman Catholics? Yet Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one. Ten years ago how many of us would have been willing to pray with one another? Yet Jesus told us to love one another. I am convinced that it is only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that such things really are beginning to come about.

As late as this past July I did not believe we would be together today. When I wrote to Dr. Stanley Horton at the Assemblies of God Graduate School, I told my chairman at Loyola University of Chicago that it was a vain effort: Classical Pentecostals were simply not open to hear about Mary. Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, probably; Baptists, possibly; Pentecostals, hardly. Today I stand before you convicted; I ask your pardon, your forgiveness. After more than ten years in the charismatic movement, after more than ten years of experience of Pentecostal fellowship, I still have much to learn.

It would be impossible to explore all the New Testament reveals about Mary in the brief time allotted. I would like to begin with the

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1 The author is indebted for materials in this section especially to Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., Understanding the Mother of Jesus (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1979); and to as yet unpublished papers delivered at the National Marian Charismatic Conference held at the University of Dayton, July 13-15, 1979, especially those of Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., "Mary and the Spirit in the Prayer of the Eucharist," Frederick Jelly, O.P., "Mary and the Gifts and Charisms of the Holy Spirit," and Rene Laurentin, "Mary, Model of the Charismatic, as seen in Acts 1-2, Luke 1-2, and John" (Tapes of these talks are available from the Marian Library of the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio 45469).