

The Sword, the Woman, and the Cross:  
The Symbolic and Personal Cooperation of the Virgin Mary in the Paschal Mystery

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From the beginning, the Church has understood Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to be the Mother of Christians. We call her the “New Eve” and cherish the understanding that she cooperated in our redemption with “faith and obedience” and so loves each of us as her child.<sup>1</sup> Is this understanding biblical? Is there evidence in the Scriptures for such an exalted view of the Mother of Jesus and her role in our redemption? Mary’s involvement in Christ’s incarnation, birth, and childhood is obvious, but what role, if any, does she play in his Paschal Mystery?

Some biblical scholars believe that “exaggerated mariological claims” have been drawn from the Gospels artificially on this count.<sup>2</sup> I aim to demonstrate in this paper that, in the words of Stephano Manelli, “...it is Sacred Scripture itself which presents this... vision of history linked to Christ and Mary...,”<sup>3</sup> namely, Mary’s incorporation into the Paschal Mystery. It is the Gospels which present Christ as deliberately and significantly associating Mary in his work of redemption. This can be seen by examining three particular passages: Luke 2:34-35, John 2:1-11, and John 19:25-27.

## **The Sword**

*“Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:34-35)*

This passage takes place during Joseph and Mary’s visit to the Jerusalem Temple to present Jesus to the Lord. Simeon, whom Luke describes in connection to the Holy Spirit no less

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<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, “Lumen Gentium,” in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), pg. 504.

<sup>3</sup> Stefano M Manelli, “Mary Coredemptrix in Sacred Scripture,” in *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate: Theological Foundations II*, ed. Mark I Miravalle (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1996), pp. 70.

than three times,<sup>4</sup> proclaims that Jesus is God's "salvation."<sup>5</sup> After this messianic proclamation, he offers a prophecy about Jesus, his future, and Mary's role in it.<sup>6</sup> It is significant that Simeon speaks this prophecy *directly to Mary* rather than to Joseph or to the child or to God (to whom his previous statement was directed). This prophecy about Jesus' suffering reveals the intimate role Mary would have in it.

To understand what Simeon is saying about Mary, we first must understand what he is saying about her child. In the opening phrase of his prophecy, Simeon alludes to what is said of God in Isaiah 8:14: "And he will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."<sup>7</sup> This prophesy of Isaiah would be fulfilled in the life of Jesus, specifically in the opposition he would receive from the Jewish leaders, culminating in his redemptive death. According to Joseph Fitzmyer's commentary on Luke, this reference is "Luke's way of expressing the scandal of the cross..."<sup>8</sup> Joseph Dillersberger agrees that by the "sign that will be contradicted,"<sup>9</sup> "it is evident that the cross is meant..."<sup>10</sup>

This phrase also prophesies the cosmic effects of Jesus' life, death and resurrection: "...Like a stone in the path He will cause many to fall; there are many, however, whom he will enable to rise again and whom he will lead into everlasting life."<sup>11</sup> Simeon is foretelling both the suffering of Jesus and the salvific power of that suffering. He also is pointing implicitly to Jesus'

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 2: 25-27 (Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition)

<sup>5</sup> Luke 2: 30

<sup>6</sup> Luke 2: 34-35

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Dillersberger, *The Gospel of Saint Luke* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1958), pg. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph A Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, vol. 28 (New York , NY: Doubleday, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> Luke 2: 34

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Dillersberger, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, pg. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

divinity by applying this line from Isaiah (which in context refers to “the Lord of Hosts”<sup>12</sup>) to Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

In light of these observations, what is the meaning of the line in the prophecy which is both directed to and about Mary: “and a sword will pierce through your own soul also...”<sup>14</sup> The structure of Simeon’s prophecy hints at the significance of Mary’s role in the redemption. The general proclamation refers to Jesus, but the line about Mary (using feminine pronouns) is sandwiched in the middle of it. According to Luke Timothy Johnson, “this sandwich effect makes the two statements mutually interpretive.”<sup>15</sup> Each statement is to be read in reference to the other. Seen in this way, even Simeon’s phrasing points to the intimate connection between Christ’s redemptive suffering on the cross and Mary’s participation in it through compassion.

An examination of the word choices in Luke’s Greek is also illuminative. The Greek word Simeon uses for *soul* in verse 35 is *psyche*. It can mean either “breath,” “life,” or “soul.” In this context, the third meaning is most likely. *Psyche* as “soul” is defined by the New Testament Greek Lexicon as “the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions (our heart, soul etc.)”<sup>16</sup> Simeon is telling Mary that she will participate in the suffering of her Son in the most intimate way possible, from the center of her person. The Greek word for *sword* used is *rhomphaia*,<sup>17</sup> which “was the large barbaric sword used by the Thracians, as distinguished from the shorter

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<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 8: 13

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Dillersberger, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, pg. 114.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 2: 35

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Gospel of Luke*. 3. Vol. 3. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991, pg 56.

<sup>16</sup> “New Testament Greek Lexicon,” Bible Study Tools, 2020, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

weapon of Roman soldiers.”<sup>18</sup> By the use of this word, Simeon emphasizes the extreme agony Mary will experience in connection with her Son’s mission. It is widely understood by biblical commentators that the sword is a “figure of Mary’s pang when her son should be nailed to the cross.”<sup>19</sup> Mary’s mystical participation in her Son’s crucifixion is, according to Joseph Fitzmyer, the “most common” interpretation of the words of Simeon to Mary.<sup>20</sup>

However, should this statement about Mary’s suffering be understood parenthetically, in isolation from the prophecy about her Son? Is Simeon simply warning her of her own future suffering, or is there a deeper meaning to his words? Is there an intrinsic connection between the prophecy about her son and that about her? According to Joseph Dillersburger, the answer comes from understanding that Jesus’ work of redemption should be seen “in the light of his incarnation.”<sup>21</sup> Because of the humanity of Jesus and the intrinsic connection between his Incarnation and Paschal Mystery, “the piercing of [Mary’s] heart necessarily formed part of the act of redemption carried out on the cross, simply because this piercing... is the extension of Christ’s sacrifice into the purely human heart of her who was both His bride and His mother...”<sup>22</sup> In Dillersburger’s view, this understanding is essential to everything that Christ did in his Incarnation, Paschal Mystery, and the sacraments: “All else- the suffering of Christ in his members, the daily offering upon our altars, etc.- follows logically from Mary’s share in this sacrifice.”<sup>23</sup> In light of this interpretation, we can see that Luke is presenting Jesus’ whole mission- Incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection- as intrinsically bound up with Mary’s

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<sup>18</sup> “Bible Hub: Search, Read, Study the Bible in Many Languages,” Bible Hub: Search, Read, Study the Bible in Many Languages, 2004, <https://biblehub.com/>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph A Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, pg. 429.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Dillersberger, *The Gospel of Saint Luke*, pg. 115.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

cooperation. Stefano M. Manelli's understanding of Luke 2:34-35 corresponds with this interpretation: "...If we view the salvific plan of God in its entirety, all the sufferings of Mary, from their very inception, have a co-redemptive value by virtue of her association with the Redeemer."<sup>24</sup> In his redeeming plan, God chose to associate Mary intimately and meritoriously in her Son's mission, accomplished in the Paschal Mystery.

We can see from the syntactical, lexical, typological, and theological reasons above that Simeon's prophecy to Mary in Luke 2:34-35 points to Mary's cooperation in her Son's salvific sacrifice on the cross.

### **The Woman**

*"On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there..." (John 2: 1-11)*

Although the story of the wedding at Cana has no explicit reference to the cross, it is a key passage foreshadowing the Paschal Mystery and points to Mary's cooperative and participatory role in it. To see this, we first must examine what Jesus is revealing about himself and his mission in this passage. First, there is important Messianic imagery present in this narrative. Both the setting of a marriage feast and the abundance of wine evoke Old Testament images of Messianic fulfillment. According to Rudolf Schnackenburg, "...wine in abundance... is a sign of the age of salvation... a characteristic of the Messiah from Judah."<sup>25</sup> Citing Hosea 2:19-20, Isaiah 25:6-8, Jeremiah 2:2, and the Song of Songs, Francis Moloney points out that "...the setting of the marriage feast also summons up biblical images of the messianic era and the

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<sup>24</sup> Stefano M Manelli, *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: Biblical Mariology*, pg. 247.

<sup>25</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1968), pg. 338.

messianic fullness, marked by wine and abundance of foods.”<sup>26</sup> Because wine is also referred to as “blood of the grape” in Hebrew poetry,<sup>27</sup> the presence of wine could foreshadow the redemptive suffering of Jesus’ messianic mission. Considering John’s characteristic use of deeply theological symbols, these images are no coincidence. By this miracle, Jesus is revealing his Messianic identity which will be fulfilled in his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Another crucial feature of this passage is Jesus’ use of the word “hour.”<sup>28</sup> This is the first of seventeen times in John’s Gospel that Jesus speaks of his “hour:”

“The ‘hour’ of Jesus unfolds gradually across the Gospel... though its first association is with a marriage feast it is eventually associated with violence (cf. 7:30, 8:20). Toward the close of the public ministry, as the threat of Jesus’ violent end approaches through a ‘lifting up’ on a cross, the ‘hour’ of violence ‘has come’ and is associated with Jesus’ glorification (cf. 12:23, 27). This theme continues into the final section of the Gospel (cf. 13:31) and is further explained as the hour through which Jesus must pass in order to return to the Father (cf. 13:1, 32; 17:5) and the hour that creates a new family of Jesus (19:27).”<sup>29</sup>

Although the idea of Jesus’ hour unfolds throughout the Gospel, it is primarily used as a reference to his *Passion and death*. According to the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible’s commentary on John, “the ‘hour’ of Christ is first and foremost the appointed time of his Passion... the climactic phase of his mission.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, we can see from Jesus’ first refusal to respond to Mary’s request in verse 3, “my hour has not yet come,” that this miracle would inaugurate the mission that would culminate in his saving Passion.

Mary’s place in this story sheds further light on its connection to the cross of her Son. Mary appears only twice in the Gospel of John: at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and at the

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<sup>26</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, pg. 66.

<sup>27</sup> *The Gospel of John: Commentary, Notes, and Study Questions* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003), pg. 21.

<sup>28</sup> John 2:4

<sup>29</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, pg. 71-72.

<sup>30</sup> *The Gospel of John: Commentary, Notes, and Study Questions*, pg. 26.

foot of the cross (John 19:25-27). Both times John refers to her as the “mother of Jesus” rather than by her name. And on both occasions Jesus calls her “woman.” This parallel leads many biblical scholars to “associate Mary’s presence at Cana and her presence at the foot of the cross when blood flowed from the side of Christ.”<sup>31</sup> In the words of Raymond Brown, “...the similarities between the two scenes are too strong to be ignored.”<sup>32</sup> Clearly, John is drawing deliberate parallels between this scene at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and its culmination in his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Mary’s prominence in John’s account of the miracle at Cana (as well as the Passion it foreshadows) is highlighted by the fact that he mentions Mary’s presence at the wedding first, even before that of Jesus and his disciples.<sup>33</sup> Francis Moloney contends that “the fact that she [Mary] is the first person introduced to the account, even preceding Jesus, is a sign that what she says and does is crucial to the story.”<sup>34</sup> John is presenting Mary’s life and action as inextricably woven with her Son’s mission, both symbolically and personally.

One of the most important indicators of Mary’s symbolic significance in this story is Jesus’ use of the word “woman” to address her.<sup>35</sup> This title is loaded with biblical symbolism which John evokes intentionally. According to Raymond Brown, this term was not used by sons to address their mothers in ancient Israel: “...there is no precedent for this in Hebrew nor, to the best of our knowledge, in Greek,” and therefore “...there is symbolic import in the title ‘Woman.’”<sup>36</sup> Since this term would not be Jesus’ typical form of address for Mary, it behooves

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<sup>31</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, vol. 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), pg 110.

<sup>32</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, vol. 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), pg. 923.

<sup>33</sup> John 2:1

<sup>34</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, pg. 71.

<sup>35</sup> John 2:4

<sup>36</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, pg. 99.

us to search for his symbolic purpose. Seen from a biblical perspective, the use of the title “woman” draws our thoughts to the first woman: Eve. Brant Pitre points out that Eve is referred to by name only once in Genesis, while she is called “woman” eleven times.<sup>37</sup> In calling Mary, “woman,” Jesus is distancing “himself from an exclusively mother-son relationship...” with Mary.<sup>38</sup> She is not to be *only* his mother, in an individual and personal sense, but his companion in the “accomplishment of God’s saving work.”<sup>39</sup> Just as Adam and Eve brought about the fall of humanity together, Jesus chooses to associate his mother as a new Eve in his work of redemption. This also makes Mary’s role a fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, in which God says that a “woman” will participate in the downfall of the serpent. Quoting John Dominic Crossan, Pitre points out that “implicit in the title “woman” is that her [Mary’s] full destiny is to be the ‘woman’ of Genesis 3:15.”<sup>40</sup> According to Raymond Brown, this connection of John’s between Mary and the woman of Genesis is recognized by both Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars:

“John thinks of Mary against the background of Genesis iii: she is the mother of the Messiah; her role is in the struggle against the satanic serpent, and that struggle comes to its climax in Jesus’ ‘hour.’ Then she will appear at the foot of the cross to be entrusted with offspring whom she must protect in the continuing struggle between Satan and the followers of the Messiah. Mary is the New Eve, the symbol of the Church...”<sup>41</sup>

A point of disagreement, however, is that some think this applies to Mary *only* as “a symbol of the Church,” and not to Mary as an *individual*.<sup>42</sup> However, it is possible to understand her role here as both symbolic *and* personal. Mary stands as a symbol of the New Eve and of the Church in Christ’s redemptive plan, while she, at the same time, cooperates freely and fully in that plan as an individual. Moreover, her personal and free fidelity corresponds perfectly with her

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<sup>37</sup> Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary* (New York, NY: Image, 2018), pg. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Francis Martin and William M Wright, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), pg. 58.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, pg. 109.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

symbolic role. She both personifies and symbolizes the faithful handmaid of God<sup>43</sup>. Just as God did not use Mary without her consent in the Incarnation, Jesus is not simply using Mary passively as a symbol. In both cases, he elicits her full and free cooperation in his plan and mission. And in both cases, she responds with perfect faith.

Mary's personal role in the miracle of Cana is one of intercession and faith. Mary's notices that the couple has run out of wine and draws this to the attention of Jesus. Considering Jesus' response (apparently in the negative), we can assume Mary was making a request of Jesus to intervene.<sup>44</sup> Implicit in this request is the belief that Jesus could perform a miracle to aid the couple. Even greater evidence of faith is Mary's response to Jesus' apparent refusal, when she says to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."<sup>45</sup> Francis Maloney points out the extraordinary faith this evinces: "She trusts unconditionally, indeed even in the face of apparent rejection and rebuke, in the efficacy of the word of Jesus...Her confident command depends entirely upon a yet-to-be-verified belief. 'Nowhere is perhaps such trust shewn.'"<sup>46</sup> Raymond Brown agrees that "Mary seems to have no doubt that Jesus will intervene and is uncertain only about the manner of intervention."<sup>47</sup> This extraordinary act of faith is in complete harmony with Mary's conduct throughout the Gospels from the annunciation to the cross.

From examining the account of the miracle at Cana in John's Gospel, we learn crucial information about Jesus' Messianic mission, which will be fulfilled in his passion and

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<sup>43</sup> Luke 1:38

<sup>44</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, pg. 98.

<sup>45</sup> John 2:5

<sup>46</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, pg. 68, 72.

<sup>47</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, pg. 100

glorification, as well as Mary's integral role in that mission both as a symbol of the New Eve and as a faithful cooperator in God's plan of salvation.

## **The Cross**

*"...Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag'dalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" (John 19: 25-27)*

As with Simeon's prophecy and the miracle at Cana, we first will look at the crucifixion scene in John's Gospel as the saving action of Jesus, the Son of God. In John's Gospel, the cross is the "hour" to which Jesus has alluded throughout his public ministry. It is the fulfillment of his mission, the accomplishment of our salvation, the re-creation of mankind. Moloney highlights this theme of fulfillment, saying that:

"the account of the death of Jesus is highlighted by a series of statements indicating fulfillment and perfection... Climaxing these indications of fulfillment, Jesus cries out 'tetelestai' (v. 30a), an exclamation of achievement, almost of triumph. The task given him by the Father (cf. 4:34; 5:36; 17:4) has now been consummately brought to a conclusion."<sup>48</sup>

Implicit in this understanding is that Jesus' crucifixion will end in resurrection, bringing the Paschal Mystery to a conclusion, but the cross is when Jesus' work of redemptive suffering is completed.

In this moment of culmination, Jesus speaks to his mother and his disciple John, entrusting them to each other.<sup>49</sup> Some commentators suggest that this verse shows nothing more

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<sup>48</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, pg. 504.

<sup>49</sup> John 19:26-27

than Jesus' filial solicitude for Mary's welfare. According to others, however, this suggestion is an oversimplification. For example, Francis Moloney contends that "at such a dramatic moment in this sophisticated and symbolic narrative the passage cannot simply mean that the Beloved disciple is to look after the widowed mother of Jesus once her only son has died..."<sup>50</sup> The Collegeville Bible Commentary agrees, stating that this scene "must have more than simple filial significance, that is, the care of Jesus for his mother at the hour of his death."<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the Anchor Bible's commentary on John states, "we doubt that Jesus' filial solicitude is the main import of the Johannine scene. Such a non-theological interpretation would make this episode a misfit amid the highly symbolic episodes that surround it in the crucifixion scene."<sup>52</sup> Clearly there is some deep significance in Jesus' final words to Mary and John. What, then, is the significance of Mary's presence at the cross and these solemn words of the dying Christ?

As with her presence at Cana, Mary's presence at the cross should be understood both symbolically and personally. In both ways, Mary is cooperating with Jesus' mission of reconciling humanity to God and bringing about a new creation. Jesus is the new Adam, restoring life to all mankind by his act of obedience to the Father.<sup>53</sup> In this mission of re-creating humanity, Jesus associates Mary with him as a new Eve. In John's crucifixion narrative, we can discern all the elements of the tragic scene of the Garden of Eden. The Catholic Bible Commentary notes that "John has reassembled all the elements of the Genesis story for a re-creation event: the serpent, the serpent's seed, the woman, the woman's seed, and perhaps, even

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<sup>50</sup> Francis J Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, pg. 504

<sup>51</sup> Dianne Bergant and Robert J Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), pg. 1021.

<sup>52</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, pg. 923.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:22

the garden locale...<sup>54</sup> Raymond Brown, along with many commentators, sees Mary's presence at the cross as symbolic of Eve and Daughter Zion, as both a reversal of the terrible event in the garden of Eden and a bringing to fulfillment of all Israel's hopes:

“...the Johannine picture of Jesus' mother becoming the mother of the Beloved Disciple seems to evoke OT themes of Lady Zion's giving birth to a new people in the messianic age, and of Eve and her offspring [mentioned in Genesis 3:15]. This imagery flows over into the imagery of the Church who brings forth children modeled after Jesus ... Such a symbolism makes intelligible John's evaluation (xix 28) that this episode at the foot of the cross is the completion of the work that the Father has given Jesus to do... ”<sup>55</sup>

The authors of The Collegeville Bible Commentary see this symbolism as well:

“The fourth Gospel may be presenting Mary beneath the cross in a double role: a) as feminine symbol of mother church... [and] b) as woman of the victory, emphasizing the feminine contribution to salvation. The negative biblical portrait of Eva has been replaced by that of the life-giving Ave.”<sup>56</sup>

We can see from the above quotes that flowing from, and connected with, Mary's symbolism as Daughter Zion and New Eve is Mary as a symbol of the Church. Looking at the Bible as a whole and the organic unity within it, (what Joseph Ratzinger referred to as the “feminine line in the Bible”<sup>57</sup>), it makes perfect sense to see Mary as the symbolic personification of all these entities: Eve, Zion, and the Church. It would seem that these symbolic roles of Mary at the cross are widely accepted. However, is Mary's significance in this scene merely symbolic?

To answer this question, we will refer to what biblical scholar Michel de Goedt calls the “revelatory formula” in the Gospel of John:<sup>58</sup>

“In this formula the one who speaks is revealing the mystery of the *special salvific mission* [emphasis added] that the one referred to will undertake: thus the sonship and

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<sup>54</sup> Dianne Bergant and Robert J Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, pg. 1013.

<sup>55</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, pg. 926.

<sup>56</sup> Dianne Bergant and Robert J Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, pg. 1013.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1997), pg. 41-45.

<sup>58</sup> Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, pg. 923.

motherhood proclaimed from the cross are of value for God's plan and are related to what is what is being accomplished in the elevation of Jesus on the cross."<sup>59</sup>

What Christ speaks to Mary on the cross, then, is a revelation of her personal role in salvation.

Although her presence is deeply symbolic, her role is not merely that of a symbolic literary device. In her presence at the cross and her obedience to these final words of Jesus, Mary receives her *personal mission* to be the mother of the new creation which Jesus brings about by his suffering, death, and resurrection. Like Jesus, and in union with him, she freely and lovingly cooperates in the Father's plan and so becomes the new "mother of all the living."<sup>60</sup>

Stefano Manelli agrees with this personal *and* symbolic role of Mary, saying that "...she cooperated in the universal redemption both as an individual person and as the personification of the 'daughter of Zion' figure of the Church that generates a new people of God."<sup>61</sup> Jesus brings about our salvation by his suffering and death, and "the fruit of the Passion and death of Jesus is the birth of the new people of God, of the new Israel, which is the Church. 'But in this birth of the Church it is Mary who has the role of Mother,' ...because it is her divine motherhood that is extended to the whole Church."<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that Mary's personal role in the redemption is not by necessity but by the wise providence of the Father and the free choice of Jesus to associate Mary in his work. Jesus "associates Mary, the new Eve, with Himself in the redemptive sacrifice... In this way, Mary's motherhood became a co-redemptive or sacrificial motherhood..."<sup>63</sup> Jesus associates Mary intimately in the work that he is accomplishing in his suffering and death. She is the mother in the new creation he is bringing about.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Genesis 3:20

<sup>61</sup> Stefano M Manelli, *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: Biblical Mariology*, pg. 326-327.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pg. 329.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pg. 336.

## Conclusion

Mary's role in Christ's incarnation and birth is obvious from both the scriptures<sup>64</sup> and the universal understanding of human motherhood. Her role in Christ's Paschal Mystery is perhaps less obvious but can be demonstrated by examining both her symbolic and personal role in the Gospels. In particular, Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:34-35 shows that Mary will be associated intimately with her Son's coming passion and death for the salvation of the world. The Gospel of John, in both the wedding at Cana (John 2: 1-11) and the crucifixion (John 19:25-27), portrays Mary as closely associated with Jesus' salvific plan, both personally, through faith and obedience, and symbolically, as the New Eve, Daughter Zion, and the Church. By examining these passages, we can see Christ's Paschal Mystery with new depth in light of "the maternal aspect of the redemption" which Mary's participation reveals.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Matthew 1:16; Luke 1:26-38, Luke 2:1-52

<sup>65</sup> Stefano M Manelli, *All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed: Biblical Mariology*, pg. 325.

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