

**TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

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**MARY, A GIFT TO KENYA
A Reception of the Marian Dimension in the Kenya
Context**

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Dedication

**To my exceptional mother
Margaret Njeri whose life taught
me the value of prayer and
perseverance in life.**

Epigraph

*Then give all to Christ and there is nothing we
can give so good as ourselves if we really
understood the Mystery*

(St. Gregory Nazianzen)

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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INTRODUCTION

Mary has been controversial in religious circles and has caused many differences among Christians. Yet the Scripture indicates in the Cantic of Mary that "...behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed." (Lk 1:48 AB). That Mary will be called blessed by all ages has not been realized. In Kenya, many who have left the catholic faith have cited Mary as one of their reasons. Due to the fact that the Catholic Church has placed much emphasis on Mary, even going to the extent of erecting her statue in the church, has led many to conclude that she is worshipped. Furthermore, she has been seen as glorified more than Christ. While this has erroneously been misinterpreted, it is true that ignorance of her through study of scripture is evident. As a result, many have not moved from the level of devotional to a personal relationship with Mary.

To enter into a personal relationship, knowing the other is important. Mary is a woman who lived in her own time. There has been many generations gone by and only through a revisit to the available information on her could we appreciate Mary as a person. This is only possible by studying the Tradition, the Holy Scripture, and the Magisterium.

In this paper, the author presents Mary as a gift to Kenya. The Scripture tells us that, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." (Jn 3:16 AB) The way that God chose to send his Son was through Mary. God has always been faithful in his love. Through Mary, God shows his maternal love — "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will not forget you. See upon the palms of my hand I have written your name..." (Isaiah 49:15-16 AB) That God would not forget us is fulfilled through Mary.

There are many reasons why Mary is a gift but all are summarized in one word – salvation. The eternal life is about living in the presence of God. There are lots of churches mushrooming everyday in Kenya. They all offer hope for the eternal life. There is an evident thirst for a spiritual fulfillment. I am not aware of any of these mushrooming churches talking of Mary. It seems that the only hope of making Mary known, loved and served is with the Catholic Church. However, one cannot give what he/she does not have. Proclaiming her to the whole world comes from a fire of deep conviction. There is a need to overcome the shyness of speaking in her name.

I take this challenge to offer an opportunity to the Kenyan Catholic faithful a portrait of Mary that will enhance greater understanding and that will serve as a tool for teaching about her, as a model for spiritual growth, and as a way of growing closer to Christ.

This paper examines some Fathers of the Church in relation to Mary. St. Justine, a second century apologist spoke of Mary as the "New Eve." St. Ireneaus of Lyons presented Mary at the central stage of the economy of Salvation. Both showed that Mary actively participated in God's plan for salvation. They also pointed out that Mary was already in the mind of God for this purpose. This teaching has become part of the Tradition since the second century.

I will also look at two other Fathers of the Church. They are what I would call, *sons of the soil*. The first, Tertullian, lived and preached in Africa, North Africa to be more precise. He ushered in the beginnings of the Marian doctrine in the Latin Church. He was very emphatic that God Incarnate marked a whole new relationship of God with his people. Mary was not acting as a vessel but her *yes* was a free acceptance to be part and parcel of God's plan of salvation.

The second Father of the Church, St. Augustine of Hippo, is not a new name to many of the African people. He presented a Mariology for the future. Just as carver looks at a tree and sees a beautiful image coming out, or as an artist is able to bring out the most sacred art from his imagination, so did St. Augustine show that in all events of God's plan of salvation Mary was the second to Christ in Salvation History. Given the fact that Mary was present at the foot of the cross, Augustine conceded that, "Then at the foot of the cross he recognized her; yet, he had always known her. Even before he was born of her, he knew his mother in her predestination. Before he, as God, created her from whom he would be created as man, he knew his Mother."¹ Augustine's insight demonstrates that thinking and teaching about Mary is rooted in the earliest centuries of the Church. This reflection continues today and I am willing to take the challenge as well.

I will look at Kenya's faith scene with the intention of presenting Mary as one who can help us unite in one true faith with God and others. Also, I will look at the moral scene with the intention of presenting Mary as one who can help us grow in the virtues of Christ. On the cultural stage, I will present Mary as one who can help us be truly African, be true and fertile mothers, and be a people of faith dedicated to God.

¹ In *Joannem*, tr. 8, 9; PL 35, 1455; *Nuova Biblioteca Agostiano* (NBA) 24, 2020 as quoted by Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999, pp. 218-219.

CHAPTER ONE

DIFFERENT PORTRAITS OF MARY

1.1 THE PORTRAIT OF MARY IN THE SCRIPTURES

“All that one says about Mary outside Scripture is weak”

(Monsignor Weber)

Mary must be studied and contemplated within the biblical context. She must be seen within the context of salvation. When we look at the Bible we see that God wishes to draw up a covenant with humankind. In fact, we can rightly say that this is the entire fundamental idea of the Bible. This covenant has been presented and described under the image of marriage – God is the Groom and Israel the Bride. The Groom has always been faithful while the Bride has remained many times unfaithful. The parallelism of the relationship in OT of Yahweh and Israel is found in the messianic era when we consider the relationship between Christ and his Church.

As quoted by de la Potterie, Hans Urs von Balthasar puts it very well that “the original plan of salvation formulated by God was that of a symbolic couple.”² This image of a couple is what God had in front of Himself when he created man and woman in order that they would represent and prepare through their mutual relationship the archetypal and final couple of Christ and the Church.

Again, the OT carries the theme of the “Daughter of Zion” or of “Lady Zion” which is directly connected with that of the covenant. Looking closely at the symbolism of Daughter of Zion, three principal aspects of the mystery of the people of God have been represented which becomes the mystery of Mary. She is in the first plan the spouse of Yahweh and by that title she becomes also the “mother of the people of God (“Mother Zion”), but she is equally the “Virgin Israel,” [...] and one which has great importance in relationship to the covenant.³

Therefore if God’s plan in creating man and woman was to enter into a covenant with Him, someone had to bridge this covenant after it was broken. Adam and Eve broke this covenant and the relationship was also affected. Christ who is born of the Virgin Mary will restore the relationship. This is ushered in by the Annunciation. But even before the Annunciation there had been a greater expectation known very well through the prophets. The Annunciation begins the fulfilment of OT hopes ushering in the NT reality. As Ignace de la Potterie puts it, “Mary is the messianic personification of the whole people of Israel as she becomes the new “Daughter of Zion”.⁴ This must be understood in a theological scheme that

² de la Potterie, Ignace, *Het Mariamysterie in het Nieuwe Testament* (The Mystery of Mary in the New Testament, N.p., 1985; *Marie dans le mystere de l’Alliance*, N.p., 1988; English trans. *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, Mumbai: St. Pauls, 1998, p. 26

³ Ibid. p. 26

⁴ Ibid. p. 36.

the “Old Testament Israel comes to its end culminating with a real person, Mary who is both point of departure and the commemoration of the NT, of messianic times and of the Church.”⁵ Mary therefore becomes the image of the synagogue in the OT and icon of the Church in the NT.

In both stories, Cana (Jn 2:1 – 12) and the scene with Mary at the foot of the Cross (Jn 19:25 – 27), the title ‘Daughter of Zion’ is applied to a definite woman. This is the true reason why in the 4th Gospel both at Cana and at the cross, Jesus addresses Mary, calling her “woman.

Consequently, “during the time of salvation, the symbolic “Daughter of Zion” is realized in Mary, the mother of Jesus, through whom salvation has come.”⁶ Moreover, medieval tradition likens Mary as a “Figure of the Synagogue” or as “The Completion of the Synagogue”⁷ “She is the real image and at the same time the achievement of the synagogue, otherwise said of Israel: Mary is the eschatological “Daughter Zion”.⁸

All the hope, which has been experienced throughout the centuries of ancient Israel, is, as it were, gathered and contained in her person. Mary thus becomes the messianic “Daughter of Zion”. With her, messianic time begins, which is not only the end of OT hopes, but also the point of departure for the end time, the age of the church, which will endure up to the final accomplishment of the history of salvation. By this token Mary becomes the icon of the Church.⁹

As cited already, all that one says, about Mary outside of scriptures is weak. Hence, where exactly do we situate Mary? Is it in the OT perspective or that of the New Testament? Or is it in the perspective of both Testaments at the same time?

Answering this question, de la Potterie says, “she is found exactly at the threshold, and thus can be considered from both sides at the same time. She is the “figure of the synagogue,” but she is also the “Type of the Church.” Or as the Father of the Church likes to call her, she is the archetype and icon of the Church. Precisely because it is in her that the OT image of the eschatological and messianic “Daughter Zion”¹⁰ is realized, Mary is the personification of the new messianic people the Church

1.1.1 Mary’s role in the plan of salvation

From the scriptural point of view, it is evident that Mary’s role in salvation history is of great significance. Her role can only be discovered from the perspectives of incarnation, redemption, and final salvation.

Flowing from the Old Testament’s typology of Mary, the New Testament presents with greater understanding the place of Mary in Salvation History. St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians opens this understanding with the only phrase in his writings when he says, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law (Galatians 4:4 AB).” Though not mentioned by name, it is clear that Paul refers to Mary, the

⁵ Ibid. p. 37

⁶ Ibid. p. 37

⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas calls Mary “mater” (mother), figure of synagogue.

⁸ de la Potterie, *Mary in the mystery of the Covenant*, p. 37

⁹ Ibid. p.72

¹⁰ Ibid. p.38

mother of Jesus. It is therefore true that Paul saw the mother of Jesus as the mediatrix of Jesus' human existence.

On the other hand, the Gospel according to the tradition of Mark introduces Mary in a very unJewish manner. In 6:3, people wonder as they ask of Jesus identity, "Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary."¹¹

The account according to the tradition of Mathew on the birth of Jesus has a vivid indication of the virginal conception of Mary, which renders to the divine sonship of Jesus. Mathew has the child and mother almost always together (Mt 2:11, 13-14, 20-21).

The account according to the tradition of Luke calls Mary, "Blessed" (Lk 1:28) and the virginal "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:43). Mary befits the title "Blessed" because of her faith (Lk 1:45). Mary is the devout disciple (Lk 8:20ff; 11:27ff) who walks with Jesus, experiencing her son's suffering, rejection, and death (Lk 2:34). She perseveres and endures patiently till the end. She is present at the Pentecost, praying with and for the discouraged disciples and is at the midst of the church at Pentecost (Acts 1:14). It is in Luke that Mary is presented as the type of the church as she is presented as the New Israel, as the Daughter of Zion.

The account according to the tradition of John depicts Mary both at the beginning and at the end of Jesus public ministry. At the wedding at Cana, John presents Mary as a "representative of those who await God's gift of Salvation from Jesus, who ask for it, and who are filled with it to overflowing."¹² She also "represents the community of salvation which is commended to John as the guarantor and witness (Jn 19:35) for the gospel."¹³

The Patristic Age, particularly Justin and Irenaeus, interpreted the Church as humanity renewed in Christ. To this humanity, they saw Mary as the Eve and as the New People of God. As a result, the relationship between Eve–Mary and Mary–Church have remained until today as ways of defining Mary's salvific significance.

The council of Ephesus (431) asserted that Mary was *theotokos*. It inevitably became obvious that the "perfected integration of Mary into dogma of Christ clearly manifests that mention of her belongs to authentic proclamation of Christ."¹⁴

1.2 MARY AS SEEN BY FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

1.2.1 *St. Justin Martyr*

The earliest Fathers of the Church spoke of a "New Eve." They identified this new Eve as Mary. This is in comparison to the old Eve. The earliest and still surviving testimony comes from Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*. This was written around 160. It is a dialogue between Justin and a rabbi around 135 in Ephesus. Ephesus was reckoned as the

¹¹ In the Jewish tradition, son's were associated with their fathers. The African Bible commentary sees the use of 'son of Mary' as highly unlikely that Jesus would be described through his mother rather than through his father unless it is meant as an insult.

¹² Salvific Significance of Mary, **In:** Beinert, Wolfgang, and Fiorenza, Schussler Francis (eds.), *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, New York: The Crossroads Publishing Co., 1955, p. 643.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 644.

city where the apostle John lived with the Virgin Mary. What Justin speaks of concerning Mary is compacted in the following statement:

Christ became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience that proceeded from the serpent might receive the destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin. For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced the good tidings to her that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her, and the power of the Highest would overshadow her: wherefore also the Holy Thing begotten of her is the Son of God; and she replied, "Be it unto me according to Thy word" (Lk 1:38). And by her has He been born, to whom we have proved so many Scriptures refer, and by Whom God destroys both the serpent and those angels and men who are like him.¹⁵

It is evident that Justin is comparing and contrasting Eve and Mary. It is a technique that we find Paul using when he compares Christ and Adam. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul notes, "in Adam all die," while "in Christ shall all be brought to life" (I Corinthians 15:22 AB). In few passages later, he concedes, "the first man, Adam became a living being," while "the last Adam a life giving spirit" (I Corinthians 15:45 AB). Therefore, with the fact that we cannot say anything about Mary outside the scripture, we can equally mirror Mary with her Son. If in Christ all live, therefore Mary is the mother of all the living.

1.2.2 *St. Irenaeus of Lyons*

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons spent a great deal of time ascribing to Mary as the New Eve. His faith came from Saint Polycarp of Smyrna who had been instructed by apostle John. Saint Irenaeus spoke of Christ as the New Adam and Mary as the New Eve. His central idea was creation's *recapitulation* in Christ. He was greatly influenced by Saint Paul in his idea that the Incarnate Christ recapitulated in himself man's history which had been lost with Adam but found with Christ who restores again the image and likeness of God in us. Thus, for Irenaeus, the "knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. The knot which the virgin Eve tied by her unbelief, the Virgin Mary opened by her belief."¹⁶

1.3 MARY AS PRESENTED BY AFRICAN FATHERS

"Long, long time ago," or, "once upon a time," is a way of telling stories in Africa. This is a way of creating an ambiance of listening for what is to follow contains a message that the listener will have to decipher. The story is told with such creativity and candled with a lot of imaginations. Important is that the story is of a long, long time ago. And how long is long? That does not matter, what matters is what does it have to do with now, this moment? As everyone listens, the storyteller might at the end say, "the lesson of our story is" or, a dismissal is given with an invitation to go and think more about the meaning of the story. Stories are sacred moments for the society. It is through stories that traditions are passed on.

¹⁵ Hahn, Scott, *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*, London: Darton, 2001, pp. 40-41

¹⁶ Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen*, p.42.

It is through stories that the past is made present. Important is the word “*remembrance*,” and with this term, I mean *bringing the past to the present* of all events of history. That is why it is important that I tell the story of our ancestors in Mariology. A story of an elder is worth more than gold and it is never despised. It comes with blessings. This short introduction brings us to Tertullian and St. Augustine.

1.3.1 Tertullian

Once upon a time, there lived a man called Tertullian. Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus was born at Carthage around 155 to a Roman family of the pagan religion.¹⁷ He studied law in Rome and taught there. He converted to Christianity around 193. After his conversion, he returned to Carthage and spent his life at the service of the Christian faith. He was the first writer to use the word *Trinity*. Unlike Justin the Martyr and Ireneaus, Tertullian did not have the influence of John. However, he too spoke of Mary as the New Eve. The following statement tells it all:

For it was while Eve was yet a virgin that the ensnaring word had crept into her ear, which was to build the edification of death. Into a virgin’s soul, in like manner, must be introduced the Word of God which was to raise the fabric of life; so that what had been reduced to ruin by her sex might by the selfsame sex be recovered to salvation. As Eve believed the serpent, so Mary believed the angel. The delinquency, which the one occasioned by believing, the other effaced by believing.¹⁸

This shows clearly that Mary, as New Eve is not a modern imposition but rather a tradition that has been there for many years.

1.3.2 St. Augustine of Hippo

Majority of people know about Augustine probably more than any other saint. His famous statement, “*our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord*,” has marked for many a spirituality of abandonment. He was also a great Mariologist. He was a prophet of what will become later the official catholic teachings on Mary.

A Long, long time ago, there lived a man called Augustine. Aurelius Augustine was born in Tagaste, in northern Africa, on November 13, 354.¹⁹ Although he grew up in a Christian family, his mother Monica spent many years praying for him to change his life. “His youth and young adulthood were characterised by moral disorder and a total lack of interest in questions of religion.”²⁰ He was far ahead of his time in his teaching on Mary. In fact, his “Marian doctrine are singularly profound and anticipate the statements of the Second Vatican Council.”²¹ Looking at the whole aspect of the salvation history, Augustine examines the Blessed Virgin Mary in relation to her Son’s mystery and the mystery of the Church.

In his development of the correlation of Mary and the Church, Augustine used very much the theology of St. Paul’s Mystical Body. As much as possible, no Christian, conceded Augustine, could live outside the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is definitely the

¹⁷ Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, San Francisco: Ignatian Press, 1999, p. 60.

¹⁸ Hahn, *Hail Holy Queen*, p.44

¹⁹ Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, p. 216

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, p. 217

Church and the Head of this Church is Christ. It, therefore, follows that Mary, too, is included in this body for the reason that she is the Mother of the Christ the Head. This whole idea is well stipulated in Augustine's statement below:

Mary is holy, Mary is blessed, but the Church is better than the Virgin Mary. Why? Because Mary is part of the Church, a holy member, an outstanding member [...] a member of the whole body.²²

But we too are members of the Church. Augustine applied the spiritual motherhood to all. We all share and she constantly forms us to be like her Son.²³ She is our Mother in the best sense of the word. Augustine puts forward a question and answer to help us understand how closely knitted we are with Mary and Christ, as both cannot be separated.

How is it that you do not belong to the Virgin's birth, if you are members of Christ? Mary gave birth to our Head; the Church gave birth to you. Indeed, the Church also is both virgin and mother, mother because of her womb of charity, virgin because of the integrity of her faith and piety.²⁴

Having looked at some of the Fathers of the Church, it is evident that Mary has been an important figure in the plan of salvation history. Those of us who understand this have no excuse of not telling others the good news about her.

1.4 MARY AS SEEN BY THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The Vatican Council II was the first to issue a complete and extensive statement on Mary's function and significance for salvation. It has emphatically taught "the devotion to and the theology about Mary have to be seen in their relationship with the mystery of Christ and the Church."²⁵ Prior to the council, veneration of Mary was, in reality, too isolated from the total message of the Christian faith.²⁶ Even more so was talking of Mary as only a vessel, an instrument, that only reduced her motherhood to a biological function. Hans Urs von Balthasar corrected this misconception when he asserted "All Marian devotion makes no sense except in relationship to Christ."²⁷

Is it not a wonder that the Council Fathers on the chapter on Mary called her "the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church?"²⁸ This meant that Mary had her place in the central event of salvation, that of the mystery of Christ. It considered Christ as the total Christ, Head and Body, – that is, with the Church. Again for a strong solid Marian devotion, Monsignor Weber, the Bishop of Strasbourg, was right in asserting "all that one says about Mary outside scripture is weak."²⁹ It is important to situate the few texts on Mary that are found in the scripture on the total salvific plan, and to discover their place in the total mystery of Christ. Mary is held by the Council to be "pre-eminent and

²² *Sermo Denis*, 25, 7; *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 163. **In**: Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Church Fathers: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999, p.222.

²³ Rule of Life of the Society of Mary, Dayton: Marianist Press, 1984, Bk. I, Chap. 1, Art. 2

²⁴ *Sermo* 192, 2, PL 38, 1012-13; NBA 32/1, 52. **In**: Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Church Fathers: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999, p. 223.

²⁵ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, pp. 20-21.

²⁶ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, p. 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Church*, Chapter 8, *Our Lady*, n. 53

²⁹ Cited by de la Potterie, **In**: *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, p. 21

totally singular member of the Church as well as its type and clearest model in faith and love.”³⁰

³⁰ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Reprint. Bandra-Bombay:St. Paul Publications, 1997. n. 53.

CHAPTER TWO

KENYAN CHURCH, A NEW RESURGENCE

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The information contained in this section of the Historical Background largely comes from the Microsoft Encarta Library. Formerly a British colony, Kenya gained independence in 1963 and has been a republic since 1964. It is bounded on the north by Sudan and Ethiopia, on the east by Somalia and the Indian Ocean, on the south by Tanzania, and on the west by Lake Victoria and Uganda. Nairobi is the country's capital city. Kenya, officially Republic of Kenya, is a member of the Commonwealth countries. It occupies an area of 582,646 sq. km (224, 961 sq.mi). It has had two head of states since independence in 1963, namely, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the founding father who ruled till his death in 1978 and Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi as vice President, succeeded Kenyatta.

According to the 2001 census estimation, Kenya has a population of 30,765,916 persons. The population growth rate is 1.27 (2001 estimates). The population density is 53 persons per sq. km (2001 estimates). 32 % of the total population is in the rural while 68% lives in the urban centres. Kenya has 30 to 40 different ethnic groups, which are distinguished from each other by language and culture. Ethnically the Kikuyu community is the largest with 21 %; Luhya 14 %; Luo 12 %; Kalenjin 11 %; Kamba 11 %; Kisii 6 %; Meru 6 % and others 19 %.

As far as religious affiliations are concerned, Protestants are 40 %, Roman Catholic 30 %, African Traditional Religion beliefs 22 %, Muslims 6 % and others 2 %.³¹

2.2 MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

The Catholic Church has had her history marked with failures and successes. Taking the paradigm of the Old Testament people of God, we see that when they were in a critical state, they looked back to their past and tried to trace the ways of God's guidance in their long history. They reckoned how Yahweh made them a great nation out of the great seed of Abraham. They retold their Exodus stories to their children, of the desert hardships and of the establishment of the Kingdom of David. In all these, they remembered the marvelous deeds of God. This remembrance filled them with gratefulness for Yahweh's gifts and they found new strength and direction for the future.

It is the same with our memories. God, the Creator God, was revered in all tribes of Kenya. He was called by different names and always remained distanced. John Baur, in the

³¹ The above information on Kenya Facts and Figures is taken from the *Microsoft Encarta Reference Library* 2002. More specifically, area data are from the statistical bureaus of individual countries. Population, population growth rate and population projections are from the United States Census Bureau, International Programs Center, International Data Base (IDB) (www.census.gov). Urban and rural population data are from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), FAOSTAT database (www.fao.org). Ethnic divisions and religion data are largely from the latest Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Introduction of his book, *The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History*, summaries it very well:

“In days not so long ago, the ancestors of this land who lived near Mount Kenya, Mount Elgon and Lake Nyanza, would leave the darkness of their little houses in the early morning, direct their faces eastwards, stand in awe before the rising sun, and greet it with a spittle. The spittle was the sign of that life which they knew came from the sun. The sun, with its light and warmth, made every creature live and grow; it rose in the east, and from the same east there followed later on in the day the clouds that brought the life giving rains. Indeed, everything good came from the east and the sun appeared as the wonderful symbol of Asis or Nyasae, the Creator God.”³²

The prophets of old foretold the coming of a Messiah over the whole world, another sun rising over our country. This was Christ, who brought the light of salvation. This Christ was the first Sun that rose over Jerusalem, the holy mountain of Sion, over two thousand years ago. This Sun rose over the ocean at the Kenyan coast over four hundred years ago when the first missionaries anchored there. The Sun did not shine in its brightness because the clouds of war obscured it. The true day of Justice, came but over one hundred years ago, when the apostles of faith, the missionaries, entered Kenya, by following the railway from Mombasa to Lake Nyanza (Victoria).³³

Already in 1860, the first Christian Mission had been established in Zanzibar. At around the same time, “the first Christmas night was celebrated together with four lonely Goans.”³⁴ As time went by, there were many African conversions. They consisted of *redeemed* slaves. Most of them were rejects from the slave markets. These included the old and feeble and small children. These are the ones who formed the nucleus of East African Christianity and the source of the first catechists.

In Nairobi, the mother church, St. Austin’s, was established in 1899. The same year saw the foundation of what is today the Holy Family Basilica. Barely, in a year’s time, on 29 September 1900, a woman was baptized and given the name *Maria*. This name was, after all the name of the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can already see the early seeds of identifying with Mary.

The Legion of Mary, which was founded by one Frank Duff, came to Kenya in 1938. The person behind its spread was Edel Quin who laid down and taught the ideals of this Marian Lay Apostolate. She died in 1944 leaving behind a tiny seed. By 1960’s the seed had grown into great tree in Eastern and Western Kenya. In the Archdiocese of Nairobi and in Mombasa the Legion was the backbone of all parish work.³⁵ Here again, we trace the Marian influence in the Kenyan Church.

Kenya’s first priest, James Camissasa (1898-1979), entrusted his apostolate to the Blessed Mother and he advised all by saying, “let us sow Hail Mary’s and we will reap a good harvest.”³⁶ This clearly indicated that the early African priests knew that for any success Mary had to be the intercessor.

³² Baur, John, *The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History*, Nairobi: St. Paul Publication—Africa, 1990, p.13.

³³ Ibid., p. 13

³⁴ Ibid. p.24

³⁵ Ibid. p. 50.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 79

With the dawn of Vatican II, the tradition African religion found a home in the church. The Councils declaration pointed out that, “a ray of that truth which enlightens all men” is to be found in the Traditional African Religion.³⁷ Even more so, that the Church “is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, or to the European way of life, but can enter into communion with different forms of culture.”³⁸ In my opinion, it is through the Incarnation this ray of truth is realized. Mary first realized this ray of truth. She teaches us today to say: “Let it be done to me according to your word (Lk 1:38).” Mary taught his Son the same readiness and availability for God the Father that we see on Cross (Lk 22:42). This is what St. Paul defines as “the obedience of faith” (Rm 1:5 and 16:26). A most original characteristic of Mary’s faith is that “she invites the disciples to believe in the person of Christ in whom are manifested the works of the Father.”³⁹ This is clear in her intervention at Cana: “His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (Jn 2:5).

In 1974, great hope emerged. The African Synod Bishops in Rome declared that a theology of Incarnation was necessary. Their argument was that “just as the Son of God was incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth who lived and taught in the Jewish culture, so the Christian faith has to be incarnated in the African person, lived and expressed in the African Culture.”⁴⁰ The African Synod Bishops made an appeal to “enlarge the limited love of clan and tribe to a universal love of all [...], or transform the magical beliefs in supernatural powers bound to material objects into a spiritual faith in God’s working through his grace.”⁴¹ To this limitless love belongs the call by the ever Blessed Virgin Mary, to imitate her, who was according to God’s design “full of grace” — *Kecharitomene*, meaning that she had been *transformed by the grace of God*. It was through her that God’s universal love overshadowed all nations. However the overshadowing has touched few. A short analysis of my experiences will help shed some light to what I perceive as the problem.

2.3 OBSERVATION

Many people out there have never had an opportunity to study theology but they are faithful to what they have learned in catechism. They have not had the chance to study Christology, Ecclesiology, and Mariology. Those of us who have had the chance to investigate, to wonder, and to question, know that our faith has a lot to offer and to be appreciated. The Tradition that has been passed down has been as a result of Church’s reflection. In fact many doctrines that we hold today have undergone great developments. Take for example, the doctrines of Immaculate Conception⁴² and the Assumption of Mary.⁴³

³⁷ On Non, Christian Religions, n. 2; *Church in the Modern World*, n.58, **In:** John Baur, *The Catholic Church in Kenya*, p. 232.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Lafrance, Jean, *In Prayer with Mary Mother of Jesus*, Paris: Editions Paulines, 1988, p.10, translation by Florestine Audette, R.J.M, from original work *En priere avec Marie, Mere de Jesus*.

⁴⁰ Baur, John, *The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History*, Nairobi: St. Paul’s Publication—Africa, 1990, p. 232.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The term *Immaculate Conception* refers to Mary’s liberation from original sin at the moment of her own conception in her mother’s womb. Pius X declared on 8th Dec 1854, in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus*: “The doctrine that the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved pure from any fault of original sin at the first instant of her conception through a singular gift of grace and privilege from almighty God, by

These raise many questions because there is no explicit record of them in the Bible. But the Catholic tradition has presented them as doctrine. Unless one is keen to know the background, one can never appreciate the meaning of the doctrines. In the same manner, what ground do I have to talk of Mary in a culture where women are not to be glorified. In a culture where majority of women still remain indoors, where men, grow socialized to be always out in the public. Why dare speak of her?

It is a simple fact that there is no house of firm foundation without the woman at the centre. Women are the fibre of the society. I strongly concur with the statement that *educating a woman is educating the whole society*. And rightly so, the Church has brought this fact ever more strongly by recognizing the *Motherhood* of Mary and by giving her the title, *Mary Mother of the Church*. By her Fiat, God became incarnate. How else could God become Emmanuel if not through a woman?

Dogmas dealing with Mary and popular Marian piety create a stumbling block for Protestants.⁴⁴ This is not only for Protestants, but in my quest for knowledge, I have come to conclude that the same applies to many Catholics as well. There has been an exodus from the Catholic Church, which still goes on even today because of some misunderstanding on Mary, on who she is, and her role in the Church. On many occasions I have been challenged by Protestants who would say, “you Catholics worship Mary.” Of course, I wonder what drives them to conclude like this, only to realise that they were once Catholic faithful. This evidently indicates a dissatisfaction of some sort.

It suffices to note that many Christians I have met and worked with, places great value on popular piety. They belong to movements such as the Legion of Mary, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, etc. Over the decades, apparitions of Mary have been claimed, investigated, and some of them authenticated. By approving these apparitions, the Church shows that Mary has a great role to play in people’s Christian life. As a matter of fact, “Marian Veneration is the appreciative response of the believer to Mary’s mission in Salvation History.”⁴⁵ The Church distinguishes two levels of veneration —the veneration directed to the person of Mary who is deemed *absolute* and the veneration directed to images and shrines, which is regarded as *relative*. Hence, the veneration to the person of Mary manifests itself in “acts of trust, thanks, reverence and petition.”⁴⁶ The proper understanding of these two levels is crucial because the accusation levelled against Mary by non-Catholics

virtue of the merits of Christ Jesus, the redeemer of humanity, is revealed by God and therefore is to be firmly and steadfastly believed by all the faithful.” (DS 2803; NR 47)

⁴³ In 1950 Pius XII ‘for the glory of Almighty God...and to increase the glory of his venerable Mother’ declared that it was a revealed dogma that ‘the immaculate, ever-Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, was taken up, body and soul into heavenly glory when her life on earth had run its course. But the Assumption, like the Immaculate Conception, insofar as it is an article of faith, cannot be simply about the glory of Mary: it must be about Christ and the redemption. This explanation is by John Saward in his article, *The Assumption* in Stacpoole, Alberic, ed., *Mary’s Place in Christian Dialogue, Occasional Papers of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary 1970-1980*, Oxford: St. Paul Publication, 1982, p. 128.

⁴⁴ “Protestant theology acknowledges a subordination salvific significance of Mary as the Mother of the eternal Word of God. With Martin Luther, it sees in Mary a sign of God’s work of grace for the sake of the sinner and a model of Christian virtue. What they reject are any direct invocations of Mary as well as any causal understanding of Mary’s mediation in salvation.” In *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, p. 644

⁴⁵ Article by Courth, Franz, *Marian Veneration*, In: Beinert, Wolfgang – Fiorenza, Schussler Francis, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, New York: The Crossroads Publishing Co., 1995, p. 445.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

rests only about the images and shrines and never goes beyond them. In the Protestant understanding, “veneration of Mary should not go beyond praise for God’s grace become visible in Mary and imitation of her virtues.”⁴⁷ It is also, according to my opinion, the level in which many Catholic faithful find themselves.

In the ecumenical perspective, the Reformation churches have disputed the invocation of Mary on the ground that it “encroaches upon Christ’s unique position as mediator.”⁴⁸ The problem of this assertion comes from the understanding of Salvation. For the Protestants, Christ’s death was once and for all. Hence, if I acknowledge Christ as my personal saviour, nothing else should come in between, hence, no mediation whatsoever. The fact of the matter is Mary is not put out of the salvation history. The homage to Mary and even the saints is an acknowledgement of the part they played in the salvation history. Any intercession through them means praying from within the communion of all who belong to Christ. Mary belongs to Christ. Therefore, any direct invocation to Mary “completes nothing else than the certainty of the resurrection, that in union with Christ not even one name goes lost.”⁴⁹

Marian devotion is found in Mary’s divine motherhood. This is well presented by Vatican II (LG 66f). In her Divine Motherhood, Mary is drawn to the mysteries of Christ. This emphasises the fact that Marian veneration therefore belongs to the Tradition of the Church. Consequently, the measuring yardstick of authentic Marian devotion is the true faith, “by which we are led to acknowledge the dignity of the mother of God, and are impelled to a childlike love for our mother and to the imitation of her virtues (Cf. LG 67, Courth’s emphasis).”⁵⁰

Protestantism has been a mark in my upbringing. I come from a family, whereby majority of my relatives are Protestants. I remember well one time having a discussion, which went like this: “Although we are different in the profession of our faith, this ought not to separate us. We should emphasis what unites us, and this is God, whether one belongs to ACK, AIC, PCEA, Jehovah’s Witness, Mungiki, etc. It does not matter, for we all serve one God.” It was interesting, I thought. I agreed with it. I still do but, for all manner of speaking, all other elements that might cause differences, religious divisions are left out. This meant that talking about Mary was out. This is something I am not at home with. From the very nature of things it is not possible to talk about a son and not talk about the mother.

What I see as a problem is that the Kenyan people have not taken time to understand and integrate Mary’s role in the Church and in the work of salvation bearing in mind that “Christ holds the primacy; it is He who is located at the centre of the prayer of the Church.”⁵¹

Today, the Kenyan Church is undergoing a new resurgence of self-evaluation. Some years back, a book entitled, *Who is Stealing Our Sheep?*, was published by St. Paul’s Publication–Africa. The title of this book is very captivating but also signals that something is not right. The question for me is, where are the guardians of the faith? Where are the shepherds? Why are the sheep being stolen? Why are they accepting to go? What is missing? And the list goes on.

⁴⁷ Article by Courth, Franz, *Marian Veneration*, in: Beinert, Wolfgang – Fiorenza, Schussler Francis, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, New York: The Crossroads Publishing Co., 1995, p. 447.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, Mumbai: St. Pauls Press Training School, p. 20

I do not claim to have the answers to these questions. There has been a year set for the God the Father, a year for God the Son, and a year for the Holy Spirit. This has been in order to help the Christian think, pray, reflect on who these Persons are. In Nairobi, every Friday of the week there are the Charismatic meetings at St. Mary's Minor Basilica. The Christians are looking for ways to be fulfilled, to be spirit filled. The Protestants look at it with quizzical interpretation, a mocking manner; *you mean Catholics also get saved?* To many Catholic faithful, the Charismatic movement causes a lot of discomfort. In a few parishes that I know, there is the Neo catechumenate movement. Their goal is to revitalize and deepen their catechism, liturgy and whole new way of living. There are many Associations — CMA, CWA, Legion of Mary, YCS, CLC, MLC and many more. All these touch different aspects of Christian faith while still remaining in the one body of Christ, the Church. But the question that boggles my mind, leaving my heart restless is that besides the year of Mary that took place in the late 1980's, why is it that Mary remains to majority still inconspicuous?

There are many homes set for caring for the aged. The children no longer see the need of taking care of their parents at their old age. The old are abandoned. For those of us who are still young, we fear old age and an early death would be freeing. This is a shame and dishonour and above all a lack of direction. The commandment, "Honour your father and your mother" is not about being obedient but it is about being present at all times when we as adults are strong and our parents are reverting to the stage of childhood where they have to be taken care of. We have forgotten the reversal of the roles. Once they were our parents and they cared and nurtured us. When they are old we take the same responsibility of taking care and nurturing. This we have failed. The society is degrading at a high rate. The Church finds herself in all this. What does she have to offer? When Pope John Paul II was giving the completed document on African Synod, he reminded all gathered that charity begins a home. When we talk of home and family, we've to ask ourselves, what knits it together? How is a house, a home without a mother?

CHAPTER THREE

MARY'S ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN KENYA

This chapter wishes to demonstrate that Mary is a gift to Kenya. There are very specific situations in Kenya that Mary can help us remedy. I will be comparing and contrasting Mary and the Kenyan Society from the point of her personal identity of Virgin and Mother. Likewise I want to demonstrate that Mary can help us incarnate Christ in many different ways in our culture. I want to show how Mary can play a great role on Kenyan political scene. The highest population in Kenya is the youth. I want to show that Mary's virginity says a lot about sexuality and human dignity, both to the younger and to older generation.

3.1 MARY vs. POOR PARENTING

Is the gift of motherhood being lost? A friend of mine in form two shared with me a very sad story. She narrated to me that she spends only ten percent of her time with her mother. Most of her time is spent in a boarding school. When she is at home she spends only ten percent of her time with her mother while ninety percent is spent with the house girl. Even more worse is that she is so distant from her father. This is a typical case of many families in the urban centres. The trend is that they leave for work in the morning and come back in the evening. The children as young as six months old are nursed by the house girl. The children do not grow seeing what work mom or dad does.⁵² There is no time spent together. All is business. Then the parents wonder why their children upon reaching the adolescent stage do rebel and actually run away from home. It is not enough to feed, buy clothes, and educate. What is important is the availability; time together, sharing time. When a child grows without the sense of being loved and of belonging, his/her future becomes one of isolation. Mothers of today ought to ask themselves, *how do I mother? If I were to be convicted for being a mother, would there be enough evidence?* This is the same attitude we bring to our faith. God, too, is busy doing what he is supposed to do. And that is caring for the world. This is why when something happens out of carelessness people will always say *it was the will of God*. This is why I strongly recommend that Mary is the person to help us re-evaluate our lives.

3.2 GIFT OF MOTHERHOOD: MARY A ROLE MODEL

Mothers by nature and by definition are relational. They can be considered as mothers only in their relationship with their children. Nature keeps mother and child so close through the first nine months of life. The body of the mother and child are made for each other. During pregnancy, they share the same food, blood, and oxygen. After birth, nature places the child at the mother's breast for nourishment. The newborn's eyes can see only far enough to make eye contact with the mother. The only beating the child hears is the mother's

⁵² This scenario is mostly found in Nairobi and other big business district centers worldwide.

heartbeat. The only voice the child hears is high tones of the female voice. The only skin the child feels is the smooth skin of the mother. At these early stages of life, the totality of the mother, body and soul, points beyond herself, to her child.

Yet, even with this intimacy, parents still remain mysterious to the child. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, shared in the very same intimate relationship with her son. She even more so eludes our imaginations and understanding. As the mother of God, she is the mother *par excellence*. She understood her role, and as a true mother she knew from the Annunciation that she was the handmaid of the Lord. When she recognized that she had superior gifts, she recognized that they were gifts as she acclaimed, “All generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:4).

3.3 BEARER OF LIFE FOR US ALL

Blessed William Joseph Chaminade (1761-1850), the Marianists founder instructed his followers to always meditate on the Creed because in it is summarised our faith. Each time we profess our faith, we are reminded of incarnation. Mary’s role in the incarnation is well emphasized that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

The Sacred Scriptures gives very little about Mary. The New Testament does not give us much. Mary is lost in the shadows. However, we have one great source of information: her own son. All of us are a product of our parents. We have combinations and tendencies of our parents. Our Physiognomy psychology are transmitted from parents to children through their genetic codes.⁵³

Evidently enough, Christ had no father in the genetic sense of the word. His transmission of the physiognomy and psychological traits definitely came from only one source—his mother. As a result, there must have been a great physical resemblance between the Son and the Mother of the Pieta. It would not be surprising that the general behaviour of Mary and Jesus must have been similar.

Jesus therefore grew from the time of his infancy, observing and admiring his mother in all her possible attitudes—humility, patience, fortitude—which he will later proclaim as beatitudes on the mountain. He grew observing in his mother peace, meekness, and mercy.

We are to some degree what our mother was. “A true mother recreates and forms her child in a certain sense to her own image and profile, in terms of ideals, convictions and lifestyle.”⁵⁴ We can therefore rightly say that Jesus was the image of Mary.

It was through Mary that the Second Person of the Trinity became enfleshed. He received a nose, a mouth, ears, eyes, feet and hands. Through Mary, God became incarnate. The Kenyan Church is in the wave of inculturation. In reflecting on the best way to do the inculturation, Mary ought to be the role model. She has a great role in the inculturation of faith. She was essential in the incarnation and surely in the inculturation as well. Mary enfleshed the Word.

There is a need of enfleshing the Word, the Gospel, in Kenya. Just as God did not have a body before the incarnation neither did God have a culture before becoming the son of Mary. It was through Mary that God received a culture. In Kiswahili, the wise saying goes, “Mkosa mila ni mtumwa” (“The one who has no culture is a slave”). Mary taught Jesus the Jewish way to dress, the Jewish way to wash, the Jewish way to eat, the Jewish way worship,

⁵³ Larranaga, Ignacio, *The Silence of Mary*, Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1991, p. 176. Translation from Spanish by V. Gaudet.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

the Jewish way to respect others, the Jewish way to serve, the Jewish way of hospitality, of courtesy, the Jewish way of thinking and the Jewish way of outlook. However, Jesus did reject through word and deed things that went contrary to the human dignity.

Mary was a great influence to Jesus. Through her, Jesus received a culture, the Jewish culture. Through Mary, the Word of God not only became incarnate, enfleshed but also inculturated. Mary's role in the inculturation of the Word of God is of great significance to Kenya today.

Mary did not inculturate the Word for the Jewish people but also for the whole world. She bore Jesus not only for the Jewish people but also for the whole world. Her "Fiat" was for eternity. Her "Fiat" was for the salvation of all. That is why she rejoiced at the good news coming to her first and prophesied that all generations will call her blessed. All generations will call her blessed because of Christ.

As the Kenyan Church struggles with birth pangs of inculturation, Mary sits at the centre as she did at the birth of the Church at Pentecost. Mary wishes that all her children be saved and not any one of them is lost. She is there always pointing to her son as she did at the wedding at Cana, "they have no wine." She is ever attentive and ready for she continues with the mission of her son, wanting all generations to know him to love him and to serve him. Mary exudes confidence, surpassing all tragedies of life. 'Wherever Mary, the mother is, there is also an energetic presence of the Holy Spirit.'⁵⁵

3.4 A MOTHER WITH MISFORTUNES LIKE US

The Sacred Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, as well as the ancient Tradition, show the role of the Mother of the Saviour in the economy of salvation. Mary was already "prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory over the serpent, which was given to our first parents after their fall into sin (cf. Gn. 3:15). She is the virgin who shall conceive and bear a son, whose name will be called Emmanuel (cf. Is 7:14; Mi 5:2-3; Mt 1:22-23)."⁵⁶

Mary said yes to God's plan of salvation. She became in word and deed the handmaid of the Lord. "Thus Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the Mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under him and with Him, by the grace of almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption."⁵⁷

Mary, in her role of salvation travelled the same paths of misfortune and crossroads. Being the Mother of God did not exempt her from being a follower of Christ. She "travelled our paths of faith. She was also searching among shadows for the true face of Jesus."⁵⁸ She had to live by faith. The cost for motherhood was painful as she risked being called 'harufa' a crude expression used to indicate that she had been raped. She suffered a child's loss for three days and experienced with her son the agony on the cross. She experienced the whole way of the cross. Such a capacity to endure pain could only be possible from a loving and caring mother.

⁵⁵ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 36.

⁵⁶ McGarry, Cecil, – Ryan, Patrick, ed., *Inculturating the Church in Africa*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2001, p.79.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵⁸ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p.56.

She was a “pilgrim travelling empty roads and dark valleys searching the face of God and the will of the Father just like us.”⁵⁹ Kenya needs to learn from Mary, a noble Mother, a true sense of love and sacrifice for the nation. She underwent testing of faith and stood firm. She pondered things she did not understand. She did what she could with the grace of God and for what she could not she left to God. She kept all her hopes in God, the designer of everything.

Kenyan people are undergoing great agony and suffering. The social structure is fragmented. Unity is a dream. Many people are looking for the easy way out. One thing that is certain with Mary is that she did not look for any escape. Her hope in God helped her surrender to the greater providence. Mary therefore is the great star of hope. She will teach as she taught her son how to bring the best in others and us.

We look at Mary and see a woman and Mother who was “disposed to suffer any consequence: the popular curse, the act of divorce, stones, flames, social rejection and human solitude. Anything.”⁶⁰ All this suffering was because of becoming a Mother.

Mary’s strength came from God only. To her all that came from “God was so great and what came from human so small! God was for her the reward, the inheritance, the gift, and the wealth. She had been treated with such predilection that all the rest was worthless.”⁶¹ Hence she was not going to let God down in his plan of salvation. She made a difference. Mary, silent as peace, attentive as a lighthouse, present as a mother, will be a hope for many who have lost any hope, many who have despaired in Kenya.

Rene Laurentin summarises it very well when he says:

This creature “blessed among all women” was on this earth a humble woman, committed to the condition of privation, work, oppression and the uncertainty of tomorrow, which are the lot of underdeveloped countries.

Mary did not only have to wash and fold the clothing but to sew it; not only to sew but before that, to weave it.

She did not only have to make bread but also to grind the grain, and to cut wood for the needs of the home, as the women in Nazareth still do.

The Mother of God was not a queen like those on earth but a spouse and a mother of labourers. She was not rich but poor.

It was necessary that the “Theotokos” [Mother of God] be the Mother of one condemned to die under the triple condemnation of popular hostility and of the religious and civil authorities of his country. It was necessary for her to share with him the working and oppressed condition which was that of the mass of people whom he had to redeem, “those who labour and are burdened.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 55.

⁶⁰ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 134.

⁶¹ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 134.

⁶² Laurentin, Rene, *La Cuestion Mariana*, p. 188, **In**: Larranaga, Ignacio, *The Silence of Mary*, pp. 213-214.

3.5 MARY AND THE KENYAN POLITICAL SCENE

The last twenty-four years have been years of oppression and suppression. It has been year after year of abuse of human rights. It has been evident that there has been a very high rate of moral decadence. People have hoped against hope that one day the Lord will lift them up. People have hoped that the Lord will open possibilities and make life better. Much deterioration of the Kenyan society has been due to bad governance, bad policies, and bad decisions. Kenya does not enjoy a clean and good record of human rights.

Above all, authority has been misused. Authority has been a stumbling block to the nations growth and development of her people. Authority has been ascendancy to power. Most Kenyan leaders profess the Christian faith. However, the practice of leadership has not reflected the gospel teaching about leadership. It has been evident that the practice of burdening and lording over others cautioned by Jesus has been the order of the day. The Scripture teaches very clearly, “whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mat 20:26-28).” Again it is well put in the first epistle to Peter, thus, “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace (I Pt. 4:10).” It is in the very same spirit that elected members of parliament vow by the Bible to serve the people of Kenya.

Jesus must have learned from her Mother the attitude to service. Mary was a servant *par excellence*. Mary never positioned herself in the place of honour. Instead, she accepted that she was the handmaid of the Lord. Whatever was to happen to her was according to the will of God. God wanted to reclaim the lost relationship between man and himself out of love. For “when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption (Gal. 4:4). “Mary’s mission was to bring forth the Messiah, the saviour. Mary was in the fullness of time and because of her availability and willingness to serve God, redemption was possible.

Mary does not perform instant magic. A word of caution is important as we look at Mary as a model in dealing with our current problems. What has been in practice is worth looking at. “Marian devotion has resulted in a paralysis of energies. Medals and scapulars for many people have become magic amulets rather than evocations of a dynamic mother.”⁶³ Another malpractice has been in many people who have looked in “images and pictures, something to touch and kiss, instead of seeking signs which awake faith and lead to loving.”⁶⁴

Jesus Christ entrusted his Mother to humanity at the hour of his death. This was so that humanity could take care of her with faith and veneration. He likewise entrusted humanity to Mary so that she could take care of us and transform us into a kingdom of love. Hence Mary will teach the best pedagogue of love. Mary will teach us how to build a Marian dimension of family. In our fragmented Kenya where tribalism has coloured our reality, Mary will teach us the need to be all embracing.

⁶³ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 206.

⁶⁴ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 206.

3.6 MARY AND PEDAGOGUE OF LOVE

Of great essence in our growth and development is love. Mary shows the way to love. The story below illustrates the need to journey is search of true love. The story teaches the way Mary incarnates love:

Once upon a time a young man set out on a journey to find out which language God speaks. He went from village to village asking the wise people what language does God speak. In the first village, the church leader said, I think God speaks Latin. The chairperson of the parish said, No, God speaks our local language, Kingorime. But the searching youth had doubts. When I will get the right answer, he said to himself, I will know immediately and feel great joy. So he set off on a great journey. He went from parish to parish, from district to district, and he was told God speaks Kikuria, God speaks Kikuyu, and God speaks Kiswahili. He went as far as Uganda and was told God speaks Luganda. He continued his journey even to West Africa and he was told that God speaks Lingala, when he passed through Zaire, Hausa in Nigeria, and Arabic when he finally reached Morocco. He still was not satisfied and he thought he'd travel to the whole world if necessary. Passing through Europe he was told French, Germany, and Italian. The Christians of North America said English while the South American said Spanish. In his heart the young man knew these answers were inadequate. Determined to find the truth, he went to China where people said God speaks Cantonese. In India he was told Hindu. He treated Israel late in December. The local people said, surely, God speaks Hebrew. Exhausted by these long travels and unsatisfactory answers, the youth entered the town of Bethlehem. The local hotels were filled. He looked everywhere. Nothing was available. In the early morning hours, he came to a cave where cows and sheep were sheltered. He was surprised to find a young lady with a newborn baby there. The young mother said to the travelling youth. Welcome, you are very welcome. He then asked this person, what language does God speak? And she said, your long journey is over. I can tell you. God speaks the language of love. God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. Overjoyed to hear these words of Mary, the young African understood God's language of love for all people, love for all races, love for all nations. That is the language that God speaks.⁶⁵

Truly, God speaks the language of love. The story illustrates beautifully the incarnation of love. God was made flesh in the womb of Mary. It was Mary's responsibility to teach the Word of God to speak. She gave God a language – Aramaic. The mystery of Mary teaching the Word to speak has a lot for the Kenyan people. As she taught the Word of God to speak, she will help us teach the Word of God, to really speak to the young people, and to the old people.

The youth of today are in need of finding a meaning for their lives. Mary did not only teach Jesus grammar but culture of her language. It is easy for one to speak to a Kamba in Kikamba, but if one does not understand the youth culture it is hard for one to communicate. Mary, the best teacher, can help us to make God's Word speak meaningfully to the youth. Mary was the First one to be evangelised at the Annunciation. She was the first one to accept the good news. She was the first believer, the first disciple. She was the first Christian. In evangelisation, we need to invoke Mary for the right words to say to those we serve. The Society of Mary in the Thirtieth General Chapter conceded that:

⁶⁵ Daino, Peter, *Mary and the African Synod, Mary and the African Synod*, Mombasa: Lwanga Communications Centre, N.d., An Audio Tape.

Openness to the Holy Spirit and listening to the Word of God, in the manner of Mary and after her example, allows us to recognize the action of God among the cultures of the world where we live. Thus we announce with clarity the Good News of salvation, identifying with everything which advances the progress of the Kingdom and rejecting all that holds it back. In this way we carry out our mission as evangelizers in the footsteps of Christ, Son of Mary⁶⁶

Likewise, each time we engage in the work of evangelization, we are called to follow at the footsteps of the Son and Mother.

3.7 MARY'S VIRGINITY AND SEXUALITY

Many of Kenyan youth seem to have lost their personal dignity. Partly, this is because of the lack of good role models. The problem lies in identity crisis. Many lack an adequate formation in matters concerning their sexuality. As a result many have ended getting their information from the mass media, and from sex magazines. Kenya records a high rate of people dying with HIV/AIDS. At least seven hundred die everyday. To combat the menace, campaigns to fight the dreaded disease by use of condoms is seen as the best option. The message given to the young and old is that sex is good if you are protected. Get a condom and get a licence to sexual activity. The argument and justification behind this message is that prevention is better than cure.

What the Church has been doing is to advocate for cure through change of behaviour. Going back to inculcating the family values is the key. The message is clear, that abstinence is the only path towards complete healing. Unfortunately, the loudest heard voice is the one from the radio, TV, and popular literature. They all say, "it is the condom."

Sexuality in some cultures was taught during initiation period. It was done during the seclusion period. It aimed at educating the youth the importance of becoming an adult and guaranteed the exercise of full rights of sexual union with one's wife and husband. Sex was sacred because it brought forth life. Virginity, therefore, had to be protected at all costs until marriage. Today, many people in Kenya do not believe in the virtue of chastity. Yet, majority of these people are Christians or, at least, read the Bible.

The youth have been intoxicated with wrong teachings about sex and sexuality. The peer pressure is so strong that even the little the parents are able to do gets ignored within a very short time. Talking about virtues to classes of standard six to eight, I asked them to share on what they understood by the word, *Trust*. One of the student confidently said that it meant *Trust Condom*. This might show how corrupted the mind of the youth is. Kenya has to reclaim the values that teach about family life, respect for personal and human dignity.

However, there is a glimpse of hope. Some youth have come together to form a movement called "True Love Waits." The movement advocates for virginity and secondary virginity. A conscience wakening by this movement is a good starting place. "God created man in his own image [...] male and female he created them (Gn. 1:27). From the beginning we are sexed beings. "Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and procreate."⁶⁷ In educating the youth, one thing is not emphasized enough, chastity. "There are three forms of the virtue of chastity: the first is that of spouses, the second that of widows and the third that

⁶⁶ Society of Mary, *Mission and Culture: Acts of the Thirtieth General Chapter*, July 1-21, 1991, New York: The Chaminade Print Shop, 1991, n. 2

⁶⁷ The Catechism of the Catholic Church (revised edition), Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001, n. 2332.

of virgins.”⁶⁸ These are not in any hierarchical order such that the emphasis of one downgrades the other.

However, in order to uplift once more the lost human dignity, I propose virginity. To many Kenyans, virginity is absurd, almost impossible. Socrates said, “the unreflected life is not worth living.” A good reflection of where we are coming from and where we are going as a people is crucial and cannot be taken for granted. The question for reflection is why maintain virginity until marriage? Mary teaches us a great deal. Good foundation is important. Looking at the life of Mary one thing is evident. “Until the age of twelve and a day, Mary was considered, like all others, a ‘child.’ At twelve and a day she was considered *gedula*, which means an adult, hence marriageable.”⁶⁹ She was considered by law to have acquired physical and psychological maturity. Attaining the age of twelve, she was handed over in espousal. Luke says that God sent his angel Gabriel “to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph” (Lk 1:27). Hence, Mary was betrothed but not married. Marriage would take place after a year. Meanwhile she stayed in her father’s house.

During the months of “espousals,” the bride guarded her virginity very seriously. “On the day of ‘procession’ two women were designated to examine the bride to ascertain that she was still a virgin. If it was proven that she had lost her virginity, a curse fell upon her, and she was called *harufa*, meaning she had been raped.”⁷⁰

In the very same manner, the above sounds very alike with some of the African practices. So Mary can help us know that it is important to uplift a culture that respects the human dignity. While Mary’s virginity was purposely to be the Mother of God, she too could have chosen a different vocation all together. But she chose to be the Mother of God. “In her nothingness and impossibility as virgin, she hands everything over to God, and also expects everything from him.”⁷¹ This gesture of Mary, teaches us the inner form of all Christian life. Her virginity shows her total dependence on God, her availability, her love for God, her dignity before God. Her virginity was because of her Son. This way she could give all her attention to her Son. Her virginity was not denigration to marriage. She married Joseph but she remained a virgin ever after. Both Mary and Joseph valued God. What they did was for God and not personal glory.

As the youth yearn for meaning to their sexuality, Mary can be a teacher. She will teach the best way to remain pure for God, The way to remain faithful in friendships, in marriage. She will teach us that when all is for God, God gives the grace to grow in holiness. She will teach us the meaning of giving all in order to receive all. John Paul II re-echoing the words of de Montfort, has a great affection for Mary and he says as Mary, *totus tuus*. Mary can teach the youth to say *totus tuus* as well.

⁶⁸ Ibid. n. 2349.

⁶⁹ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 126.

⁷⁰ Larranaga, *The Silence of Mary*, p. 127.

⁷¹ Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *The Marian Profile*, London: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 78.

CONCLUSION

John Paul II in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*, stipulates that “Mary’s motherhood is at the center of the Pascal mystery” (no. 23). He stresses her mediation as that of personal initiative whereby she “places herself between her son and humankind in their reality of their wants, needs, and sufferings. She puts herself ‘in the middle,’ not as an outsider but in her position as a mother” (no. 21). The giftedness of Mary to Kenya precisely lies in Mary as a mother.

I have treated the subject matter with great eagerness, not forgetting that I was in some sense defending her as a mother. I hope that the portrait of Mary as a gift to Kenya gives Kenyans an opportunity to deepen their love for her which is at the same time is the love for Christ.

I have defended Mary for who she is, namely a mother and gift to be realized. Having realized that we are children of Mary, we have therefore a call to make her known loved and served.

Besides her natural motherhood, she shares with us in her spiritual motherhood. She continues being a gift to us in the sense that she continues being the mother of Jesus *in us*. Her spiritual motherhood continues everyday. Mary is continually pregnant with Christ and gives birth to him *in us* and *through us*.

In living our everyday Christian commitment, the continuing birth of Christ means precisely that we incarnate and “give birth” to Christ who felt, acted, and lived over two thousand years ago.

Therefore we have a vocation as Kenyan people that is maternal in nature. We are called to be “pregnant with” and “give birth” to Jesus Christ. It is the role of everyone to be part of building the Kingdom of God by making Christ present now. Today, we are called to imitate in word and deed the person of Christ. We are called to incarnate the attitudes of Christ in whatever we do. St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans reminds us of this vocation, “to be conformed to the image of his son” (Rom 8:29). Mary will help us and form us into other Christ as her son.

Mary is sensitive to the needs of this world. We are called to be sensitive to these needs as well. The measure, in which Mary gives birth to Christ in us, depends on how sensitive like Christ we are. We are called with the help of Mary to incarnate Christ in the suffering with those who suffer. Mary lived for others and taught Jesus how to live for others. She will teach us if we abandon ourselves to her maternal care to develop and inculcate in our lives the attitudes of Jesus.

Mary will give birth to Christ in us in the care and compassion we show to the landless, the sick, and the street families. Christ always had his heart open to the poor. He shared in their condition. Mary will truly be mother according to the extent we allow her to incarnate in us her son, who is Christ of the poor.

I have heard many times people of Kenya lament on the need to share the resources we have. This calls for a true and genuine love for others. To be like Jesus calls for the spirit of sharing. Mary will give birth to Christ in us in the measure that we try to be like Jesus.

We are called to be servants. The politicians have realized that the gospel message of service is the only way to go now. In service to others, we are called to exercise our duties with humbleness and patience. In serving others Jesus was not interested with his own glory but of the father. He sought the good in others at all times. He rejoiced at the growth and

development of others. Mary will truly be our mother when we let her incarnate in us Christ, poor and humble.

Mary is not only a spiritual mother but a true mother, a true gift. Bro. Peter Daino is a Marianist Brother. He is currently working in Malawi. He put it very well that, “as a Luo, Mary is a true mother, as a Kikuyu, Mary is a true mother, as a Kisii Mary is a true mother, as an American, Mary is a true mother. She is the mother of our cultural identity.”⁷²

It is therefore the time to claim Mary as our own. It is time to make Mary our own. Mary will become African and Kenyan in the way we act in transforming the world. In Kenya, the Magnificat, can become a creed for the best way to evaluate our Christian commitment. The recently concluded general elections showed that people needed a government that will lift them up from all social ills. Mary as our gift reminds us that the Magnificat can still be understood by many of us poor because we long for the day when in our lowliness God will lift us up in our hunger, thirst, and poor governance. The language of the Magnificat is full of hope and will become our song. With Mary, we will glorify God for choosing to change the course of our history. Truly Mary is a mother and a gift to Kenya and to Africa.

⁷² Daino, Peter, *Mary and The African Synod*, Mombasa: Lwanga Communications Centre, N.d., An audio Tape.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| AB | The African Bible |
| AIC | African Inland Church |
| AIDS | Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| Art | Article |
| Bk | Book |
| Chap. | Chapter |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CLC | Christian Life Communities |
| Cf | confer; compare |
| CMA | Catholic Men Association |
| Co. | Company |
| CWA | Catholic Women Association |
| ed./ eds. | editor/editors |
| etc | <i>et cetera</i> , and so forth |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| Gal | Galatians, the letter to the |
| Gn | Genesis, the book of |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| Ibid | <i>Ibidem—in the aforementioned place</i> |
| IDP | International Data Base |
| Jn | John, the gospel of |
| LG | <i>Lumen Gentium</i> , Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church |
| Lk | Luke, the gospel of |
| Mat | Mathew, the gospel of |
| MLC | Marianist Lay Communities |
| NT | New Testament |
| OT | Old Testament |
| p./pp. | page/pages |
| Pt | Peter, the letter |
| PCEA | Presbyterian Church of Eastern Africa |
| Rm | Romans, the letter to the |
| Sq.km | Square kilometer |
| Sq.mi | Square mile |
| TV | Television |
| UN | United Nations |
| YCS | Young Christian Students |

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