**Bishop Barron’s “Catholicism”**

***Episode 4: “Our Tainted Nature’s Solitary Boast; Mary the Mother of God***

The Annunciation

* The angel said to her ***“Ave Maria, rejoice o’ highly favored daughter; the Lord is with you; blessed are you among woman”***. *(Luke 1:28)*
* Mary was afraid of when the angel came before her. Gabriel advised Mary, “***Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son and Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus”.*** *(Luke 1:30-31)*
* When Mary questions how this will be possible since she has no relations with man. Gabriel explains the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her so that the holy offspring will be called, Son of God.
* Mary responded, ***“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”*** *(Luke 1:38)*
* Mary is the New Israel. In the Old Testament many people when summoned by God would run away from God resisting his word.
* Mary does what God asks. The essence of the Biblical drama is distilled in that encounter. We see the nature of God in display in the graceful nonviolent manner of invitation.
* Whatever the opposite of rape is it is on display in the Annunciation. Mary is invited, even courted by God’s messenger. Her freedom and dignity are respected. Her curiosity is encouraged. We see a human being in full in the person of Mary.
* The Church Fathers were eager to contrast Mary, the mother of God, with Eve, the mother of all the living.
* At the decisive moment Eve took the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, succumbing to the temptation to seize godliness.
* Why had God forbidden the eating of the forbidden fruit? The serpent would have Adam and Eve believe that God had forbidden the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because he was jealous of human flourishing.
* God had given our first parents free reign in the Garden of Eden. So why was there a prohibition on eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God wants us to fall in love with him.
* When a man and woman initially have an interest in one another they will evaluate one another. Their rapport will come to life only in the measure that they fall in love; that they surrender to one another. At the end of all our achieving we must let ourselves be achieved by God.
* This is Mary; declaring herself to be the handmaid of the Lord and allowing herself to become the Mother of God.
* Mary barely glimpsed the full implications of what this would mean.
* Mary’s obedience reversed the disobedience of Eve.
* All the forms of the Church’s life spring from the Marian form; this acquiescence to the will of God; this attitude of fiat. ***“Let it be done to me according to your word”***. *(Luke 1:38)*
* Why do we venerate (honor) Mary? We honor Mary because she is the mother of God. That God would be so humble so as to have a human mother. Mary is an advocate for the human race.

Mary and Zion

* Mary is a pivotal figure in the history of salvation. Mary is a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
* Mary is Zion. She is Israel. Mary sums up the great figures of this holy people who God had prepared over many centuries to receive His word.
* She is a daughter of Abraham, the first one to listen to God in faith.
* She is like Sarah, Hannah and the mother of Sampson since she gives birth against all expectations.
* She is like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the great prophets, who longer for the coming of the Messiah.
* She is the fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant in the temple. She becomes in the realistic way possible the bearer of the divine word.
* She is like the author of the Psalms and the book of Wisdom and Proverbs for she reflects on these things in her heart.
* Mary is Israel at its best in that she is faithful, hopeful, patient, attentive to God’s Word and quick to respond to the divine promptings.
* Quick to the divine promptings. St Luke tells us that after the Annunciation Mary proceeded in haste to the hill country of Judea.
* Israel was often slow in responding to God. Mary moves. At the wedding feast of Cana, Mary turns to the servants and says to ***“Do whatever He tells you.”*** *(John 2:5)*
* Mary is the new Israel who follows the divine word. Mary is the model for all of us.

Mary: The Mother of God

* As Jesus was dying on the cross, Jesus looked to his mother and the disciple who he loved. He said to Mary, ***“Woman, behold, your son”***. *(John 19:26)* Jesus than said to John, ***“Behold your mother”***. *(John 19:27)* From that hour John took Mary into his own home.
* John took Mary with him when he traveled to Ephesus in Asia Minor. They both ended their days in that city.
* Nestorius was the bishop of Constantinople. He was very influenced by the Antioch school which placed a great emphasis on the humanity of Jesus.
* In 420 AD Nestorius proclaimed that in Christ two persons come together: divine and human in an intense moral union. Nestorius believed that Mary was responsible for the human element in Jesus and should be called Christotokos, bearer of Christ, but not Theotokus, mother of God.
* For Nestorius it was the height of blasphemy to say that God has a mother.
* Cyril of Alexandria took issue with Nestorius’ teaching that Mary was the Christotokos as opposed to the Theotokus. Cyril believed that Nestorius was a heretic. He called for the Council of Ephesus.
* After much deliberation the council fathers determined that Jesus ought not to be though of as a human person with an intense relationship to the person of God

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* If Jesus was a human person with an intense relationship with the person of God that would make Jesus a supreme saint as opposed to the Incarnate Son of God.
* In His unique person, divinity and humanity come together. Jesus was equally human and divine. Nestorius was wrong.
* If Jesus is truly divine and Mary is the mother of Jesus, she ought to be called the mother of God. To deny that Mary is the Mother of God is to deny that Jesus is divine.
* Whatever we say about Mary is not meant to draw attention to her as to Christ. To say that Mary is the Mother of God is to defend that densely textured claim that Jesus truly is divine. That in Jesus, God became one of us.

The Immaculate Conception

* The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is Christological in purpose since it speaks of the Incarnation.
* In 1854 Pope Pius IX declared that Mary through a special grace was preserved free from original sin from the moment of her conception.
* This is why the archangel Gabriel could refer to Mary at the Annunciation as full of grace.
* If Mary was like the rest of us, tainted by original sin, she would have fallen almost certainly into a variety of actual sins.
* The church teaches that God preserved her from sin and hence filled her with grace from the first moment of her life.

*Why would God do this? Does this teaching imply that Mary did not need to be saved?*

* God wanted to prepare a worthy vessel for the reception of His word.
* Just as the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple was pure and inviolate. This definitive temple, this new holy of holies should be untrammeled.
* God knew that Mary would play a decisive role in the history of salvation; that she would be tightly associated with the work of her son.
* It was appropriate that Mary should be sinless.
* Mary is like the rest of us. She is saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. Since grace is eternal or outside of time it can be applied in a way that undermines the ordinary rhythm of time.
* Thus, it was by kind of a preemptive strike that Christ’s grace removed sin from the Blessed Mother even before Christ appeared physically.
* The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception received a most surprising ratification in Lourdes, France.
* In February 1858, Bernadette Soubirous saw an apparition of Blessed Mother. Bernadette was instructed to return to the site for the next fifteen days. Blessed Mother also told Bernadette to advise the parish priest to build a temple on this site.
* Bernadette’s parish priest did not initially believe her. She was sharply rebuked. Bernadette did not know who it was that appeared to her. Bernadette referred to the woman that appeared to her as “the lady”.
* On March 24, 1858, the eve of the feast of the Annunciation, Bernadette felt impelled to go to the grotto. The lady was there to meet her. Bernadette asked the lady, “What is your name?”. The lady responded, “I am the Immaculate Conception”.
* Bernadette was an uneducated peasant girl. She did not know what the term “Immaculate Conception” meant. The Bernadette advised her parish priest and others that the lady who appeared to her was the “Immaculate Conception” speaks to the validity of the Marian apparition at Lourdes and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The Assumption

* The Doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was declared in 1950. The teaching is that at the end of Blessed Mother’s earthly life she was assumed body and soul into heaven.
* The Assumption of the Virgin means just this, the elevation of Mary in the entirety of her person into the dimension of God.
* At the end of the Apostles Creed we proclaim the resurrection of the Body. Blessed Mother is someone who has experienced this definitive salvation.
* The Eastern church believes that Blessed Mother fell asleep and was assumed body and soul into heaven. In the Eastern church it is called the Doctrine of the Dormition.

Mother of the Church

* Immaculate Mary, the mother of God, assumed body and soul into heaven is not merely a historical interest nor is she simply a powerful spiritual exemplar rather as queen of all saints, Mary is an ongoing presence; an actor in the life of the church.
* Her basic task is to draw people into fellowship with her son. The church believes that Mary continues to say yes to God and to go forth on mission.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

* On December 9, 1531 and Indian man, Juan Diego, as making his way on the hill of Tepeyac on his way to Mass.
* He saw a woman clothed with celestial light. She announced herself as the mother of the most high God.
* She had a request for Juan Diego. He was to ask the Bishop to build a temple on Tepeyac in her honor. Juan Diego did take the message to the bishop. The bishop listened to him. He told Juan Diego that he wanted a sign.
* Juan Diego returned to Tepeyac on December 12th. He saw Blessed Mother. She asked him to take off his tilma. She helped him to arrange a group of roses that were blooming despite the lateness of the year. On the surface it appeared that the roses would be the sign for the bishop.
* Juan Diego had the roses bundled up in his tilma. He went directly to the bishop. When he was ushered into the bishop’s presence, he opened his tilma. The roses fell to the ground.
* To his great surprised the bishop and his aides were kneeling. On the inside of the tilma was the image of the lady clothed in light.
* The tilma is on display today at the Basilica of Guadalupe at Tepeyac hill.
* Studies have shown that the Tilma is from the 16th century. It is woven from cactus fibers which under the best of circumstances would have lasted twenty or twenty-five years and yet it is still on display today.
* Mary did not appear to Juan Diego as a Spaniard or as an Aztec but as a blend of the two races.
* She is called by the Mexicans as La Virgin Morena. The cincture that she wears was an Aztec sign of pregnancy.
* She stands in front of the sun and on the moon. Her cloak is bedecked by stars. The sun, moon and stars were gods for the Aztecs. This woman is greater than the sun, moon and stars.
* She keeps her eyes down and her hands folded in prayer acknowledging that there is one greater than she.
* Guadalupe means “the one who crushes the serpent”. The serpent was another chief Aztec divinity. The crusher of the serpent is the one prophesied in the book of Genesis. Proto Evangelium.
* ***Within ten years of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe almost the entire nation of Mexico was converted to Christianity.***

Mother of the New Covenant

* Like many other cultures of that time the Aztec culture did practice human sacrifice. Tensions would arise in a culture. With the tensions a scapegoating mechanism would kick in.
* The culture would find someone of some group to blame. They would cast their anxieties on that individual or group. They would ostracize and persecute them. This often led to them being sacrificed.
* In this process ancient cultures would feel the renewal of their community. Ancient cultures believed that God was pleased with scapegoating violence.
* When our Lady of Guadalupe identified herself, she said that she was the Mother of the Most High God.
* She was announcing the emergence into the world of the true God. Who at the climax of His life became not the perpetrator of scapegoating violence but the victim of it.
* In Jesus crucified we see the true God stand not on the side of the victimizers but on the side of the victims.
* The world is ordered not through violence. The world is orders through love and nonviolence.
* As Mexico was evangelized the practice of human sacrifice ended. The evangelization of Mexico changed the very nature of society.
* In the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke we find Mary’s great hymn of praise to Yahweh.
* It commences the with the simple declaration “My soul magnifies the Lord”. Mary announces that her whole being is ordered to the glorification of God.
* Her ego wants nothing for herself. It wants only to be an occasion for giving honor to God.
* God needs nothing. Whatever glory Mary gives to God returns to her benefit so that she is magnified in that very act of magnifying God.
* In giving herself away fully to God, Mary becomes a super abundant source of life. She becomes pregnant with God.