

## The Queenship of Mary

Have you ever wondered why the Post-Vatican II Church kept this title? Are not we supposed to be less authoritarian and more pastoral in our Church? Would not such a title be antithetical to ecumenism?

If “Queenship” referred to a worldly title, then it would definitely be anti-Gospel. Furthermore, if “Queenship” meant a feminine king, a counterpart to Christ, it would be heretical!<sup>1</sup>

As Cardinal Newman once said, “We need not argue, we need not dispute, we need but define.” Just what is the Queenship of Mary? The Title “Queen” refers to Our Lady’s pre-eminence in the church as one of its members. As the first and most prominent follower of Christ, she participates fully in Christ’s royal Kingdom. That is why she is looked upon as “Queen”. Clearly, she is not a “goddess”!

Is it just a resurrected medieval concept? No. According to the research of Pope Pius XII, this devotion can be traced to the earliest Christian times. The first Christians just assumed that if Christ was the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings and Prince of Peace (IS 9:6), then logically His mother would be Queen. Why would the early Christians assume this thought? We need to historically look at the way the ancient Easterners regarded queens. The Gebirah, or “Queen-Mother”, possessed a pre-eminence, that is, an influence over the king and a common destiny with him. She exercised an official function on the king’s marriage and acted in legal affairs. Ted Sri, in his book, Queen Mother, describes it in this way:

The mother of a ruling monarch held a powerful position in many near Eastern kingdoms. She often influenced political, military, economic and cultic affairs and a key part in the process of dynastic succession. In fact, the mother of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Ad Caeli Angelorum*, Encyclical Of Pope Pius XII On Proclaiming The Queenship Of Mary, note 39, October 11, 1954

king was more influential than the king's wife! Indeed, it was generally the king's mother who ruled as queen, not his wife.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, when we delve into the deeper meaning of Biblical monarchy, the ideal of a just sovereign did not consist so much in his impartial administration of the law as in the fact of providing help and protection to the needy, the weak and the poor. The Divine Lordship, a lordship of love, shows God's glory in the divine sovereign freedom to love and forgive.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, going back to the earliest Christian times, the Christians, who at first were Jewish, would easily assume Mary, Jesus' Mother, as the Queen.

In addition, Pope Pius XII, in his extensive research, quoted copiously many Fathers, or early Christian writers of the Church. They all attested to Mary's Queenship. This historical devotion correlated with liturgical usage, such as the "Salve Regina" in the Office chanted by the monks and nuns, popular devotion, such as the fifth glorious mystery in the popular prayer, the Rosary, the Litany of Loretto, which mentions Mary as Queen several times, and Christian iconography, which long before the twentieth century shows Jesus crowning His Mother as Queen.

The most fascinating story is that of Portugal. Portugal had dedicated eight centuries to Mary as its Patroness. Pope Pius XII, calling Portugal the "Land of Mary most holy" pointed out on May 13, 1946, that Our Lady protected Portugal for eight centuries. Portugal, during the first five centuries placed itself under the titles of "St. Mary of Alcabaca", "St. Mary of Victory", "St. Mary of Belem", both in the nation's struggles against other invaders for the establishment of the country and in all the adventurous heroism in discovering new islands and continents.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ted Sri, *Queen Mother*, (Emmaus Road Publishing, Ohio, 2005, pp. 45-46)

<sup>3</sup> Cardinal Walter Kaspers, as cited in *The Dictionary of Mary*, (Catholic Book Publishing Company: New York, 1985) p. 288

<sup>4</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Mary's Universal Queenship*, translated in *Papal Teachings (on) Our Lady* (Daughters of St. Paul: Mass, 1961) Selected and arranged by the Benedictine Monks of Solemes, pp. 265-266

In 1646, the restored monarch and the entire nation reunited and proclaimed the Immaculate Virgin the Patroness of his kingdoms and dominions. The king consecrated his own crown to the Blessed Mother with a special tribute of submission and with an oath to defend, even with his life, the privilege of her Immaculate Conception.

The most faithful Virgin did not fail those who placed their hope in her. World War II did not touch Portugal, a rare phenomenon in Europe. For 87 years Portugal has been renowned for its comparative stability and peace. (By the way, the king of Portugal, since 1646, has never worn a crown to show his gratitude to the Virgin Mother of God.<sup>5</sup> )

With the verifying of all this history, one may ask, “But why still use the title ‘Queen’”? We may just as well ask, “Why do the Gospels still retain the term “kingdom of God”?”

Christ came to found a kingdom. The third luminous mystery attests to this: “Proclaiming the Kingdom of God”. We refer to this term frequently when we say the “Our Father”: thy kingdom come. Thus, it is fitting that Mary is the “Queen”.

We just have to be careful to explain that she is not a queen in the worldly sense. She echoes what Jesus said to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world.” (Jn 18:36) It is a kingdom of humility, love and forgiveness, where those who serve are first. This Queen ushers in peace by her imploring the King, as she did at Cana, to help her children.

She is ultimately a Queen of Mercy, a Mother to whom we can all confide, especially when we feel lost, sinful, alone. It is then, like any good mother, that she hastens to help. May more of us go to Mary and spread the love of her, for then peace and joy will come.

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<sup>5</sup> Pope Pius XII, p. 266, *ibid.*