

## Introduction

### The theological problem

The placing of oneself in the hands of Mary, the gift of oneself to her, is, as we shall see, an ancient tradition in the Church, attested to in every era of her life. Yet, at the same time, this custom raises a “theological problem”: How can one give, entrust or consecrate oneself to a human person when only God is the ultimate goal of our lives? Has the “tradition” of the Church in this regard actually been a “corruption” which needs to be purged of impure elements that divert our full attention from Christ, who is the only “way” to the Father (cf. Jn. 14:6)? As a young theology student in the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council, I was inclined to think so.

It seemed obvious that the goal of the Council was to bring us back to our roots, to sweep away unnecessary accretions, to reset our goals. From this perspective, consecration to Mary seemed to be missing the mark. Why consecrate oneself to Mary? Why not simply go straight to Jesus? Why multiply expendable “go-betweens”? The question continues to be asked today.

Happily, the history of Catholic theology provides answers to these questions, as we shall see in our survey of Marian consecration in the spiritual journey of the Church. Two great protagonists and theorists of this practice come readily to mind, although they are far from being the only ones: Saints Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort and Maximilian-Maria Kolbe. Although their veneration for Mary was very great and they called themselves respectively her “slave” and her “possession

and property,” they cannot in justice be accused of “Mariolatry” because, in their vision, Jesus is never eclipsed by His Mother.

Nonetheless, from a “negative” perspective it is still useful in every era to ask the crucial questions again, because they are perennial and we gain in understanding as we work our way through them. Not only that, but there are many Catholics today who fear that the gift of oneself to Mary is at best an indirect way to Jesus, or at worst an obstruction or aberration. Further, there are many of our separated Christian brothers and sisters for whom the very idea of consecrating or entrusting oneself to Mary appears as a disturbing deviation from Gospel Christianity. Indeed, is there a Christological foundation for such a practice?

From the “positive” perspective as well, there is value in raising the question anew. What is the hidden spiritual dynamism, which explains the phenomenal growth of movements like the Legion of Mary and Maximilian Kolbe’s Niepokalanów, which can topple oppressive regimes in places as disparate as Poland and the Philippines? Why was John Paul II so doggedly persistent in entrusting every local church and country as well as the universal Church to the Mother of God? Is there a Christological perspective which justifies such deportment?

## The purpose of this study

Hence, the explicit purpose of this study is to analyze the act of consecration or entrustment to Mary in order to discover its basis in the mystery of Christ the Incarnate Word and in the eternal plan of God—and to do so explicitly in terms of the teaching and practice of one of the Church’s supreme pastors, Pope Saint John Paul II.

From the moment of his election to the papacy on 16 October 1978, he never hesitated to bring the role of Mary to the forefront of Catholic life and thought. The newly elected

Pope John Paul II, speaking spontaneously from the central loggia of Saint Peter's Basilica on the occasion of his first public appearance as Pope, said these words:

I was afraid to accept this nomination, but *I did it in the spirit of obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and of total confidence in His Mother, the most holy Madonna ...* I present myself to you all to confess our common faith, our hope, *our confidence in the Mother of Christ and of the Church*, and also to start anew on this road of history and of the Church, with the help of God and with the help of men.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did the newly elected Supreme Pontiff break with precedent in addressing himself to the estimated throng of 200,000 who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square that evening to discover the identity of the 263rd successor of Peter and to receive his first blessing, but he also sounded one of the most persistent notes of his pontificate: *total confidence in Mary*.

This had been signaled already twenty years before with his episcopal coat of arms, whose primary feature is a cross "which does not correspond to the customary heraldic model,"<sup>2</sup> but which is "enough off center to make room for the initial of Mary, symbolically standing at the foot of the Cross of her Son,"<sup>3</sup> thus underscoring her unique role in the redemption. In iconographic language the statement cannot be missed—even if it may be a source of chagrin to experts in ecclesiastical heraldry. But if the symbolism were not enough, the motto would clearly bring the matter home with the simple words "Totus tuus," the beginning of a longer prayer, which he adapted, abbreviated and transposed from the Latin prayers composed by Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort: *Tuus totus ego sum, et omnia mea tua sunt. Accipio te in mea omnia. Præbe mihi cor tuum, Maria*

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<sup>1</sup> *Inseg I* (1978) 3 [*Talks* 48–49] (emphasis mine).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Talks* 47.

<sup>3</sup> George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981) 279.

[“I belong entirely to you, and all that I have is yours; I take you for my all. O Mary, give me your heart”].<sup>4</sup> The first sentence is attributed to Saint Bonaventure.<sup>5</sup> The last two sentences are adaptations of John 19:27 and Proverbs 23:26. He took *Totus tuus* as his motto as bishop and pope.

Indeed it cannot be doubted that Pope John Paul II brought the figure of Mary and her maternal relationship with the followers of her Son to the fore in the course of his pontificate in ways that surpass those of all his predecessors. And chief among the ways in which he accomplished this were the unprecedented and constantly multiplying acts of consecration or entrustment to Mary, which he made and commented upon. Pope John Paul’s declaration of the second Marian Year in the history of the Church on 1 January 1987,<sup>6</sup> and the subsequent celebration of that special time of grace<sup>7</sup> for the Church from Pentecost of 1987 to the Feast of the Assumption in 1988 with the issuance of the Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*,<sup>8</sup> further created the context in which to study his understanding of the relationship which the Lord Jesus willed between His Mother and His followers. Again, towards the end of his long pontificate he proclaimed the “Year of the Rosary” from October 2002 to October 2003 with the issuance of the Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariæ*,<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> These Latin sentences come from the beginning and the last sentence of #266 in the *Treatise on True Devotion*. Cf. *Œuvres complètes de saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982) 666–667. *God Alone: The Collected Writings of St. Louis Mary de Montfort* (Bay Shore, N. Y.: Montfort Publications, 1987) 375–376. He explained his adoption of this terminology in *Gift and Mystery: On the 50th Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, Africa, 1996) 42–43.

<sup>5</sup> *Psalt. Majus, cant. Ad instar illius Moïsis*, Ex. 15 (*Opera Omnia*, Vivès, Parisii 1868, 221 b).

<sup>6</sup> *Inseg X/1* (1987) 6–7[ORE 969:5].

<sup>7</sup> René Laurentin in the title of his book on the topic describes the Marian Year as *A Year of Grace with Mary*. The English edition translated by Msgr. Michael J. Wrenn was published by Veritas, Dublin, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> *Inseg X/1* (1987) 678–744 [*Mother of the Redeemer: on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1987)].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Inseg XXV/2* (2002) 486–521.

on 16 October 2002, the 24th anniversary of his election to the See of Peter.

The unprecedented and constantly multiplying acts of consecration and entrustment to Mary which I alluded to above constitute what I will refer to throughout this study as the Holy Father's "program of entrustment." "If the last popes have spoken in positive terms of Marian consecration," said Stefano De Fiores, "John Paul II has made of it one of the characteristic programmatic points of his pontificate,"<sup>10</sup> "a programmatic point of spiritual life and pastoral practice."<sup>11</sup>

### The present state of research

While this "program of entrustment" was duly noted early in the pontificate by any number of commentators and scholars such as Father De Fiores, no one undertook a systematic study of it. Thus far, the most detailed inquiry would seem to be that of Padre Angel Luis, C.Ss.R., "La consagración a María en la vida y doctrina de Juan Pablo II," which appeared in *Estudios Marianos* (51:77–112) in 1986; and while that essay is helpful in signaling some fundamental texts and their magisterial precedents, it rather exposed the topic than treating it thoroughly.

Hence, what I wish to present in this study is an in-depth analysis of the papal magisterium of Pope John Paul II with regard to the question of Marian consecration based on his published statements, which occur in homilies, addresses, official documents and prayers.<sup>12</sup> For the sake of assessing the continuity and consistency of his thought, I have also had recourse to Italian

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<sup>10</sup> "Cons" 406 (my translation).

<sup>11</sup> Stefano De Fiores, S.M.M., "Questi tuoi figli o Madre," *OR* 9–10 dicembre 1981, p. 2 (my translation).

<sup>12</sup> The principal source for these is the *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* published by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana. In the case of English translations I depend almost entirely on the translations provided by the weekly English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* or convenient collections of those (St. Paul Editions), published by the Daughters of St. Paul in the United States.

and English translations of his pre-papal writings and homilies.<sup>13</sup> Without a doubt there are further riches to be mined in the corpus of his works produced as priest and bishop in Krakow and further studies to be undertaken, but I have limited myself primarily to his papal teaching, which is most important for the life of the universal Church.

## The sources

Since his first papal visit to the Patriarchal Basilica of Saint Mary Major on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 1978, John Paul hardly passed up an opportunity of placing the Church and her destiny in the hands of Mary.<sup>14</sup> In virtually every country he visits and every region of Italy to which he travels as its Primate he seeks out a Marian sanctuary in which to renew his entrusting of the Church Universal and the local church of that place to the Madonna. And his “habitual acts of entrustment” to Our Lady in addresses to the faithful, in Angelus messages, in pontifical documents and especially in his fraternal discourses to Bishops on the “ad limina” visit are simply legion. Documenting these references has, indeed, been a major preoccupation for me since the autumn of 1984. I am indebted to the late Don Domenico Bertetto, S.D.B., for his indefatigable work of chronicling the Pope’s Marian teaching for the first six years of the pontificate in his six volumes entitled *Maria nel Magistero di Giovanni Paolo II* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1980–1986). While I never had the privilege of meeting Don Bertetto, his work initiated me into the study of the *fontes* and provided helpful orientation.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the Bibliography where I list pre-papal works.

<sup>14</sup> The beautiful book, *Affido a Te, O Maria*, a cura di Sergio Trasatti e Arturo Mari (Bergamo: Editrice Velar, 1982), just began to chronicle the principal Marian consecrations of the Pope from 8 December 1978 to 7 June 1981. Father Bogumil Lewandowski, in his book, *Tutti consacrati alla Madonna* (Rome, 1988) 48–149, provides some of the major national texts up to the entrustment of the United States in Los Angeles on 16 October 1987.

## The method

The method that I utilize in this study is an analysis of the major themes, which I have found to be immediately related to the topic of Marian consecration in the thought of the Pope, without attempting to superimpose any category on them. I do point out in the historical section how the Pope is at home with the terminology of virtually every major period in the Church's long tradition of Marian consecration; and I attempt as well to signal for special notice springs which seem to have contributed particularly to his formation, such as the thought of de Montfort, Kolbe and Wyszyński; but the major divisions of part two, the heart of this study, have emerged from a steady pondering of the texts themselves.

Following the fundamental work of expository analysis, I consider in the third part the teaching of John Paul II on Marian consecration vis-à-vis the contemporary theological context. There, I have simply striven to compare the theological synthesis, which I have extracted from the corpus of his papal teaching, with representative contemporary theological thought on the subject of Marian consecration. From this comparison I highlight what I consider to be the primary contributions of John Paul II to the theology of Marian consecration—and these contributions continued to develop until the end of his life. Finally, it was necessary to take into consideration the changing position of mariologists regarding Marian consecration.

## Framework of the Pope's program of entrustment

Within the framework of this “program of entrustment” there were certain acts which emerged as particularly solemn and paradigmatic. The first is the text of 7 June 1981. It was made by previous recording for Pentecost Sunday, 7 June 1981,<sup>15</sup> in conjunction with the celebration of the 1600th anniversary of the First Council of Constantinople and the 1550th anniversary

<sup>15</sup> *Inseg* IV/1 (1981) 1241–47 [ORE 688:7, 10].

of the Council of Ephesus. The event itself had been planned well in advance by the Pope. The double observance had been the object of a Pontifical Letter, *A Concilio Constantinopolitano I*, addressed to the bishops of the world,<sup>16</sup> in which he spoke of Mary's divine maternity as establishing a "permanent link with the Church" (*perpetuum vinculum maternum cum Ecclesia*).<sup>17</sup> His more active participation in the festivities marking the observance of these two great Councils and culminating on Pentecost Sunday, however, was precluded by an assassin's bullet on 13 May 1981. The circumstances of this act of entrustment to Mary, which addressed her as "entrusted to the Holy Spirit more than any other human being" and "linked in a profound and maternal way to the Church,"<sup>18</sup> were particularly poignant, then, and may also be reckoned as the plea of a stricken father on behalf of his family. The very same act was renewed again on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 1981 before the icon of the *Salus Populi Romani* in St. Mary Major's.<sup>19</sup>

The above-cited act of entrustment became the archetype of two subsequent acts, closely modeled upon it, which gained

<sup>16</sup> *Inseg IV/1* (1981) 815–28 [ORE 678:6–8].

<sup>17</sup> *Inseg IV/1* (1981) 824 [ORE 678:7].

<sup>18</sup> *Inseg IV/1* (1981) 1245 [ORE 688:10].

<sup>19</sup> *Inseg IV/1* (1981) 1245–47 [ORE 688:10]. But for one alteration, the text as it appears in *Inseg IV/2* (1981) 876–79 is identical with the earlier text, except that it uses fewer exclamation points and italics (perhaps merely a matter of the type-setter's discretion). A new English translation was also rendered by the staff of the English language edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*; it seems to differ from the earlier one in only minor stylistic variations; cf. ORE 714:12. The one alteration in the text occurs in the seventh paragraph. In the prior version the Pope said: "Embrace with the love of the Mother and Handmaid of the Lord those who most await this embrace, and also those whose act of dedication you too await in a particular way" (ORE 688:10). [*Abbraccia con l'amore della Madre e della Serva del Signore coloro che questo abbraccio più aspettano, e insieme coloro il cui affidamento Tu pure attendi in modo particolare. Inseg IV/1* (1981) 1246.] In the version he used on this date he said: "Embrace with the love of the Mother and the Handmaid of the Lord the peoples who await this embrace the most, and likewise the peoples whose consecration you, too, are particularly awaiting" (ORE 714:12). [*Abbraccia con l'amore della Madre e della Serva del Signore i popoli che questo abbraccio più aspettano, e insieme i popoli il cui affidamento Tu pure attendi in modo particolare. Inseg IV/2* (1981) 878.]

considerably more public notice. The first of these was made on 13 May 1982, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima, in that humble village in Portugal where Our Lady had first appeared sixty-five years earlier. It was also the first anniversary of the near-fatal attempt on his life. These two events remained closely linked in the mind of the Holy Father as he himself told the people of Portugal:

I come here today because on this very day last year, in St. Peter's Square in Rome, the attempt on the Pope's life was made, in mysterious coincidence with the anniversary of the first apparition at Fatima, which occurred on May 13, 1917.

I seemed to recognize in the coincidence of the dates a special call to come to this place. And so, today I am here. I have come in order to thank divine Providence in this place which the Mother of God seems to have chosen in a particular way. *Misericordiae Domini, quia non sumus consumpti* ["Through God's mercy we were spared," Lam. 3:22.], I repeat once more with the prophet.<sup>20</sup>

I had already intended for some time to come to Fatima, as I have already had occasion to say upon my arrival in Lisbon. But after the well-known attempt on my life a year ago in St. Peter's Square, on regaining consciousness, my thoughts turned immediately to this sanctuary to place in the heart of the heavenly Mother my thanks for having saved me from danger. I saw in everything that was happening—I never tire of repeating it—a special motherly protection of our Lady. And in the coincidence—there are no mere coincidences in the plans of divine Providence—I also saw an appeal and, who knows, a reminder of the message which came from here 65 years ago, through three children, children of simple country people, the little shepherds of Fatima, as they became known throughout the world.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Inseg V/2* (1982) 1569 [*Portugal* 74].

<sup>21</sup> *Inseg V/2* (1982) 1537–1538 [*Portugal* 49–50].

The importance of this event had been previously signaled to the Bishops of the world by a letter of 19 April 1982,<sup>22</sup> addressed to each of them by the late Cardinal Agostino Casaroli (1914–1998), Secretary of State of His Holiness, informing them that he intended “in spiritual union with all the Bishops of the world, to renew the two acts whereby Pope Pius XII entrusted the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.” The Pope also announced his intentions to the faithful in the course of his Regina Cæli message of 9 May 1982.<sup>23</sup> The act itself was preceded by a finely wrought homily<sup>24</sup> on Mary’s role in the Christian life, her spiritual maternity and the meaning of consecration to her, and was renewed again on 16 October 1983 after the Canonization Mass of Saint Leopold Mandić of Castelnuovo (1866–1942)<sup>25</sup> in the presence of all the bishops who were attending the Synod on Reconciliation and Penance.<sup>26</sup>

The second of the acts deriving from that of Pentecost Sunday 1981 was given more advance publication and, correspondingly, more emphasis was placed on the collegial nature of the act. It was announced in a Pontifical Letter to all the bishops of the world, dated from the Vatican on 8 December 1983, but only published on 17 February 1984.<sup>27</sup> It was intended to be one of the crowning acts of the Holy Year of the Redemption, which began on 25 March 1983 and concluded on Easter Sunday, 22 April 1984. John Paul presented the rationale to his brother bishops in this way:

In the context of the Holy Year of the Redemption, I desire to profess this [infinite salvific] power [of the Redemption] together with you and with the whole Church. I desire to

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<sup>22</sup> Secretariat of State No. 85685.

<sup>23</sup> *Inseg* V/2 (1982) 1460–1461 [ORE 734:2].

<sup>24</sup> *Inseg* 1567–77 [Portugal 72–85].

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Matthew and Margaret Bunson, *John Paul II’s Book of Saints* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2007) 98–99.

<sup>26</sup> *Inseg* VI/2 (1983) 793–96 [ORE 735:5–12]. This was done with the omission of paragraphs 2–7 of number 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Inseg* VII/1 (1984) 416–418 [ORE 823:2].

profess it through the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God, who in a most particular degree experienced this salvific power. The words of the Act of consecration and entrusting which I enclose, correspond, with a few small changes, to those which I pronounced at Fatima on 13 May 1982. I am profoundly convinced that the repetition of this Act in the course of the Jubilee Year of the Redemption corresponds to the expectations of many human hearts, which wish to renew to the Virgin Mary the testimony of their devotion and to entrust to her their sorrows at the many different ills of the present time, their fears of the menaces that brood over the future, their preoccupations for peace and justice in the individual nations and in the whole world.

The most fitting date for this common witness seems to be the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord during Lent 1984. I would be grateful if on that day (24 March, on which the Marian Solemnity is liturgically anticipated, or on 25 March, the Third Sunday of Lent) you would renew this Act together with me, choosing the way which each of you considers most appropriate.<sup>28</sup>

The Pope carried out the act itself on Sunday 25 March 1984, in St. Peter's Square before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which ordinarily occupies the site of Mary's appearances at the Cova da Iria in Fatima, Portugal, and which was especially flown to the Vatican for this occasion. The Act of Entrustment<sup>29</sup> was recited by the Pope after the Mass commemorating the Jubilee Day of Families.

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<sup>28</sup> *Inseg VII/1* (1984) 417–18 [*ORE* 823:2].

<sup>29</sup> *Inseg VII/1* (1984) 774–77 [*ORE* 828:9–10]. The text is exactly the same as that earlier transmitted to all the Bishops of the Church [*Inseg VII/1* (1984) 418–421; *ORE* 823:2, 12] with this exception: that the Pope inserted between the two sentences of the last paragraph of number 2 these additional words when he recited it in St. Peter's Square: "Enlighten especially the peoples whose consecration and entrustment by us you are awaiting" (*ORE* 828:10); [*Illumina specialmente i popoli di cui tu aspetti la nostra consacrazione e il nostro affidamento. Inseg VII/1* (1984) 776].

These number among the great acts of consecration and entrustment in the pontificate of John Paul II; and on the vigil of the Solemnity of the Annunciation in 2004, which would be his last celebration of that solemnity on this earth, he reminisced about them, but first he explained their Christological and Marian significance:

Tomorrow we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Annunciation that leads us to contemplate the Incarnation of the Eternal Word made man in Mary's womb. The Virgin's "yes" opened the doors to the implementation of the heavenly Father's saving plan, a plan of redemption for all men and women.

If this feast, which this year falls in the middle of Lent, takes us back, on the one hand, to the beginnings of salvation, it invites us, on the other, to turn our gaze to the Paschal Mystery. Let us look at the crucified Christ who redeemed humanity, obeying the will of the Father to the very end. On Calvary, in the last moments of his life, Jesus entrusted Mary to us as Mother and gave us to her as children.

Since she is associated with the Mystery of the Incarnation, Our Lady shares in the Mystery of the Redemption. Her *fiat*, which we will commemorate tomorrow, echoes that of the Incarnate Word. In close harmony with the *fiat* of Christ and of the Virgin, each one of us is called to say our own "yes" to the mysterious designs of Providence. Indeed, that joy and true peace which all ardently hope for even in our times only springs forth in full acceptance of the divine will.

On the eve of this feast which is both Christological and Marian, I am thinking back to several significant moments at the beginning of my Pontificate: to 8 December 1978, when I entrusted the Church and the world to Our Lady at St Mary Major's; and to 4 June the following year, when I renewed this entrustment at the Shrine of Jasna Góra. I am thinking in particular of 25 March 1984, the Holy Year of the Redemption. Twenty years have passed since that day in St Peter's Square when,

spiritually united with all the Bishops of the world who had been “convoked” beforehand, I wanted to *entrust all humanity to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* in response to what Our Lady asked at Fatima.<sup>30</sup>

As we shall see, this statement introduces us to many of the themes that we will find in his teaching about Marian consecration and entrustment.

But besides the great and solemn public acts referred to above, there were literally hundreds of others. For instance, on 13 May 1991, the tenth anniversary of the attempt on his life, the Pope went to Fatima to thank Our Lady for her powerful intervention in sparing his life and to renew once more the consecration of the world to her. The text of this act of entrustment was quite independent of those of 1982 and 1984 from a literary point of view and considerably briefer. In the course of this prayer of dedication he spoke personally to the Virgin as “*My Mother* for ever, and especially on 13 May 1981, when I felt your helpful presence at my side” while addressing her also as “Mother of Christ and of the Church,” “Mother of all people,” “Mother of the nations” and “Mother of life.” Concluding this invocation he declared:

In Collegial union with the pastors, in communion with the entire People of God spread to the four corners of the earth, today I *renew* the filial entrustment of the human race to you. *With confidence we entrust everyone to you.*<sup>31</sup>

These great events, which stand out in the pontificate of Pope John Paul II must not be seen as isolated acts, but rather as special moments in continuity with his whole “program of entrustment.” Here is how he spoke of his “program” without calling it such in his address to the College of Cardinals at the end of 1979, his first full year as Pope:

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<sup>30</sup> *Inseg XXVII/1* (2004) 358–359 [ORE 1837:4].

<sup>31</sup> *Inseg XIV/1* (1991) 1238 [ORE 1191:7].

All this *per Mariam*. I entrusted the beginning of my Pontificate to her, and I brought to her in the course of the year the expression of my filial piety, which I learned from my parents. Mary was the star of my way, in her most famous or most silent sanctuaries: Mentorella and St. Mary Major, Guadalupe and Jasna Gora, Knock and the national Sanctuary of Mary Immaculate at Washington, Loreto, Pompei, Ephesus. I entrust myself to her. To her I entrust the whole Church, now ending a year and awaiting the dawn of the new one.<sup>32</sup>

Again he spoke thus to the Roman Curia on the Vigil of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul in 1982:

This year, in a special way, after the attempt on my life which by coincidence occurred on the anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin at Fatima, my conversation with Mary has been, I should like to say, uninterrupted. I have repeatedly entrusted to her the destiny of all peoples: beginning with the act of consecration of 8 December (1981), feast of the Immaculate Conception, to the consecration to the Virgin of the countries visited: of Nigeria at Kaduna, of Equatorial Guinea at Bata, of Gabon at Libreville, of Argentina at the Sanctuary of Lujan. I remember the visits to the Italian sanctuaries of Our Lady of Montenero in Livorno, and of Our Lady of St. Luke in Bologna; culminating in the pilgrimage to Fatima in Portugal, “Land of St. Mary,” which was a personal act of gratitude to Our Lady, almost the fulfillment of a tacit vow for the protection granted me through the Virgin, and a solemn act of consecration of the whole human race to the Mother of God, in union with the Church through my humble service.<sup>33</sup>

There was no veering from the path of this “program of entrustment” from the beginning of the pontificate, nor any suggestion that he considered it finished. For instance, he solemnly consecrated Poland to its Queen on his first return

<sup>32</sup> *Inseg* II/2 (1979) 1497 [ORE 615:13].

<sup>33</sup> *Inseg* V/2 (1982) 2442–2443 [ORE 744:6].

visit as Pope on 4 June 1979,<sup>34</sup> but he also did so again with less external pomp but no less explicitly on 19 June 1983.<sup>35</sup> Again on the Solemnity of the Assumption in 1991, he led a huge international throng of youth in an act of entrustment to Our Lady at Jasna Góra as a major feature of the Sixth World Youth Day.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, he entrusted the United States to Mary on 7 October 1979 in Washington, D.C.,<sup>37</sup> and also again in Los Angeles on 16 September 1987.<sup>38</sup> It would be possible to adduce many other such instances at great length while what I have referred to as the “habitual” entrustments number in the hundreds every year according to the texts supplied in *L'Osservatore Romano* and in the *Insegnamenti*. On the basis, then, of this large body of John Paul's consistent teaching, we will analyze the theological question of Marian consecration.

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<sup>34</sup> *Inseg* II/1 (1979) 1416–1419; [*Poland* 110–115].

<sup>35</sup> *Inseg* VI/1 (1983) 1595–1600 [*ORE* 791:9–10].

<sup>36</sup> *Inseg* XIV/2 (1991) 257–259 [*ORE* 1204:7].

<sup>37</sup> *Inseg* II/2 (1979) 683–684; [*U.S.A.* 250–253].

<sup>38</sup> *Inseg* X/3 (1987) 593–595 [*ORE* 1007:14]