

# INTRODUCTION: MEDIATION



The Spring 2021 issue of *Communio* dwells on the theme of “Mediation.” This theme bears at once on revelation and on the sacramental character of the created universe. When God shares himself with the world, what does this mean for the sign or person through which God is glorified in being made known? Can it be that a mother is more wholly herself in sharing the world’s goodness with her children and so letting this goodness appear to them through her? Each author published here accounts for mediation as the condition for and as an intrinsic characteristic of communion. If mediation in its many analogous expressions makes it possible for love to be realized, anything that mediates is dignified by the role it plays in this event.

In “Mediation: The Distinguishing Mark of Christianity,” **D.C. Schindler** reflects on how God, both in creating and in saving, always communicates his presence to his creature through and with created natures, as is disclosed perfectly in the Incarnation. Inwardly structured by the love from which it flows, Jesus Christ’s unique and universal mediation of the Father imparts the love it reveals by including others in its very mediating, first Mary and ultimately the universal Church. In this light we discover that mediation in every order manifests divine generosity. “Mediation implies not just the enrichment of the other as recipient of the gift, but an enrichment of the gift itself, and therefore of the giver himself.”

In “The Annunciation of the Flesh: Bodily Mediation in the Work of Charles Péguy,” **Jennifer Newsome Martin**

attends, with the French poet, to God's way of giving himself through the humblest and most vulnerable aspects of creation. "In becoming 'a man like others among others,' God thereby accepts not only the limitations of a human body, but also the limitations of human language and forms of linguistic and historical transmission." For Péguy, the necessity of receiving God through suffering the precarity of the flesh belongs to the glory of creaturehood, as appears most radiantly in the fecundity of the blessed Mother.

In "Memory Eternal: Fruitful Death as the Form of Personal Mediation (Part I)," **Erik van Versendaal** presents happiness as a loving exchange where each participant gratuitously mediates the other's wholeness to the other. "To receive the other's beauty as intimately as possible . . . is at once to receive back one's love (and therein oneself), but as transfigured through the beloved's answer." Commenting on Plato's *Symposium*, van Versendaal holds that reciprocal mediation between persons cannot but proliferate toward the fruit that can mediate this very bond and the happiness it expresses.

**Antonio López** ponders the form of God's self-revelation in "Conceived by the Power of the Holy Spirit: On the Son and Holy Spirit's Coworking of the Incarnation." Christ's mission to communicate the Father's love through the hypostatic union is bound up with and dependent on the Spirit's own mediatorial task. "The mediation of the Spirit of the Father, which ensures that Christ obeys humanly, is part of his growth into human perfection, that is, into the total, ever-new, clarifying, and liberating dependence on the Father, who superabundantly affirms the goodness of man's finite being and thus illumines its real meaning." According to López, this "coworking" between Son and Spirit in the economy is pervasively shaped by and so reveals in its very structure the event of fruitful love that is the eternal life of the Trinity.

In "Arriving at Mediation through Maternity: Understanding 'Maternal Mediation' in John Paul II," **Carly Henderson** treats of Mary's vital cooperation with God in the work of salvation. In answer to a reductionist understanding of such activity as an exercise primarily of power, Henderson proposes that Mary's mediating role should be contemplated in relation to her motherhood. "To be a mother is . . . to teach a child how to

give of himself to others and participate within communion with other persons and above all with God himself.” Mary’s singular role does not constitute a barrier between Christ and ourselves, for her maternal mediation serves precisely to make her Son’s presence available to all.

**Paolo Prosperi**, in “With the Eyes of an Eagle: Symbolism and the Proclamation of Faith in the Fourth Gospel,” meditates on how St. John’s portrayal of Jesus teaches the faithful to behold in the flesh of Christ the Father’s love for the Son. Through his use of symbolism, St. John faithfully remembers the concreteness of Christ’s life in a way that is maximally revelatory of its inner truth. Prosperi brings to light how the symbol bears the form of the divine love it mediates, inviting the believer’s contemplative participation in this same love. “Love is *gift*, one that draws some of its generosity precisely from the fact that the lover, in offering himself, gives to the beloved the ability to collaborate in the consummation of the gift itself.”

Finally, in *Retrieving the Tradition*, we publish **Albert Béguin**’s “Charles Péguy, Poet of the Incarnation.” Béguin celebrates Charles Péguy’s gift for lifting up the lowliness of bodily existence in time, doing so in light of Jesus Christ in whom eternity entered into utmost intimacy with our own condition. “Through the Incarnation, the chasm between eternity and time has been crossed in a single moment, a moment that is not enclosed in just one temporal point but transforms every instant: the same blood that was shed one day is still that which is spilled each day on the altar.” □

—The Editors