

**THIRD PART, QUESTION 27**  
**Of the Sanctification of the Blessed Virgin**  
*(In Six Articles)*

After the foregoing treatise of the union of God and man and the consequences thereof, it remains for us to consider what things the Incarnate Son of God did or suffered in the human nature united to Him. This consideration will be fourfold. For we shall consider: (1) Those things that relate to His coming into the world; (2) Those things that relate to the course of His life in this world; (3) His departure from this world; (4) Those things that concern His exaltation after this life.

The first of these offers four points of consideration: (1) The Conception of Christ; (2) His Birth; (3) His Circumcision; (4) His Baptism. Concerning His Conception there are some points to be considered: (1) As to the Mother who conceived Him; (2) as to the mode of His Conception; (3) as to the perfection of the offspring conceived.

On the part of the Mother four points offer themselves to our consideration: (1) Her sanctification. (2) her virginity; (3) her espousals; (4) her annunciation, or preparation for conception.

Concerning the first there are six points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, was sanctified before her birth from the womb?
- (2) Whether she was sanctified before animation?
- (3) Whether in virtue of this sanctification the fomes of sin was entirely taken away from her?
- (4) Whether the result of this sanctification was that she never sinned?
- (5) Whether in virtue of this sanctification she received the fulness of grace?
- (6) Whether it was proper to her to be thus sanctified?

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**Whether the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before her birth from the womb?**

IIIa q. 27 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth from the womb. For the Apostle says (1 Cor. 15:46): "That was not first which is spiritual but that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual." But by sanctifying grace man is born spiritually into a son of God according to Jn. 1:13: "(who) are born of God." But birth from the womb is a natural birth. Therefore the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth from the womb.

**Objection 2.** Further, Augustine says (Ep. ad Dardan.): "The sanctification, by which we become temples of God, is only of those who are born again." But no one is born again, who was not born previously. Therefore the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth from the womb.

**Objection 3.** Further, whoever is sanctified by grace is cleansed from sin, both original and actual. If, therefore, the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before her birth from the womb, it follows that she was then cleansed from original sin. Now nothing but original sin could hinder her from entering the heavenly kingdom. If therefore she had died then, it seems that she would have entered the gates of heaven. But this was not possible before the Passion of Christ, according to the Apostle (Heb. 10:19): "We have [Vulg.: 'having'] therefore a confidence in the entering into the Holies by His blood." It seems therefore that the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified before her birth from the womb.

**Objection 4.** Further, original sin is contracted through the origin, just as actual sin is contracted through an act. But as long as one is in the act of sinning, one cannot be cleansed from actual sin. Therefore neither could the Blessed Virgin be cleansed from original sin as long as she was in the act of origin, by existence in her mother's womb.

**On the contrary,** The Church celebrates the feast of our Lady's Nativity. Now the Church does not celebrate feasts except of those who are holy. Therefore even in her birth the Blessed Virgin was holy. Therefore she was sanctified in the womb.

**I answer that,** Nothing is handed down in the canonical Scriptures concerning the sanctification of the Blessed Mary as to her being sanctified in the womb; indeed, they do not even mention her birth. But as Augustine, in his tractate on the Assumption of the Virgin, argues with reason, since her body was assumed into heaven, and yet Scripture does not relate this; so it may be reasonably argued that she was sanctified in the womb. For it is reasonable to believe that she, who brought forth "the Only-Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth," received greater privileges of grace than all others: hence we read (Lk. 1:28) that the angel addressed her in the words: "Hail full of grace!"

Moreover, it is to be observed that it was granted, by way of privilege, to others, to be sanctified in the womb; for instance, to Jeremias, to whom it was said (Jer. 1:5):

“Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee”; and again, to John the Baptist, of whom it is written (Lk. 1:15): “He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother’s womb.” It is therefore with reason that we believe the Blessed Virgin to have been sanctified before her birth from the womb.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Even in the Blessed Virgin, first was that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual: for she was first conceived in the flesh, and afterwards sanctified in the spirit.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Augustine speaks according to the common law, by reason of which no one is regenerated by the sacraments, save those who are previously born. But God did not so limit His power to the law of the sacraments, but that He can bestow His grace, by special privilege, on some before they are born from the womb.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The Blessed Virgin was sanctified in the womb from original sin, as to the personal stain; but she was not freed from the guilt to which the whole nature is subject, so as to enter into Paradise otherwise than through the Sacrifice of Christ; the same also is to be said of the Holy Fathers who lived before Christ.

**Reply to Objection 4.** Original sin is transmitted through the origin, inasmuch as through the origin the human nature is transmitted, and original sin, properly speaking, affects the nature. And this takes place when the off-spring conceived is animated. Wherefore nothing hinders the offspring conceived from being sanctified after animation: for after this it remains in the mother’s womb not for the purpose of receiving human nature, but for a certain perfecting of that which it has already received.

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### Whether the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before animation?

IIIa q. 27 a. 2

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before animation. Because, as we have stated (a. 1), more grace was bestowed on the Virgin Mother of God than on any saint. Now it seems to have been granted to some, to be sanctified before animation. For it is written (Jer. 1:5): “Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee”: and the soul is not infused before the formation of the body. Likewise Ambrose says of John the Baptist (Comment. in Luc. i, 15): “As yet the spirit of life was not in him and already he possessed the Spirit of grace.” Much more therefore could the Blessed Virgin be sanctified before animation.

**Objection 2.** Further, as Anselm says (De Concep. Virg. xviii), “it was fitting that this Virgin should shine with such a purity that under God none greater can be imagined”: wherefore it is written (Canticles 4:7): “Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.” But the purity of the Blessed Virgin would have been greater, if she had never been stained by the contagion of original sin. Therefore it was granted to her to be sanctified before her flesh was animated.

**Objection 3.** Further, as it has been stated above, no feast is celebrated except of some saint. But some keep the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Therefore it seems that in her very Conception she was holy; and hence that she was sanctified before animation.

**Objection 4.** Further, the Apostle says (Rom. 11:16): “If the root be holy, so are the branches.” Now the root of the children is their parents. Therefore the Blessed Virgin could be sanctified even in her parents, before animation.

**On the contrary,** The things of the Old Testament were figures of the New, according to 1 Cor. 10:11: “All things happened to them in figure.” Now the sanctification of the tabernacle, of which it is written (Ps. 45:5): “The

most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle,” seems to signify the sanctification of the Mother of God, who is called “God’s Tabernacle,” according to Ps. 18:6: “He hath set His tabernacle in the sun.” But of the tabernacle it is written (Ex. 40:31,32): “After all things were perfected, the cloud covered the tabernacle of the testimony, and the glory of the Lord filled it.” Therefore also the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified until after all in her was perfected, viz. her body and soul.

**I answer that,** The sanctification of the Blessed Virgin cannot be understood as having taken place before animation, for two reasons. First, because the sanctification of which we are speaking, is nothing but the cleansing from original sin: for sanctification is a “perfect cleansing,” as Dionysius says (Div. Nom. xii). Now sin cannot be taken away except by grace, the subject of which is the rational creature alone. Therefore before the infusion of the rational soul, the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified.

Secondly, because, since the rational creature alone can be the subject of sin; before the infusion of the rational soul, the offspring conceived is not liable to sin. And thus, in whatever manner the Blessed Virgin would have been sanctified before animation, she could never have incurred the stain of original sin: and thus she would not have needed redemption and salvation which is by Christ, of whom it is written (Mat. 1:21): “He shall save His people from their sins.” But this is unfitting, through implying that Christ is not the “Saviour of all men,” as He is called (1 Tim. 4:10). It remains, therefore, that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified after animation.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The Lord says that He “knew” Jeremias before he was formed in the womb, by knowledge, that is to say, of predestination: but He says that He “sanctified” him, not before formation, but before he

“came forth out of the womb,” etc.

As to what Ambrose says, viz. that in John the Baptist there was not the spirit of life when there was already the Spirit of grace, by spirit of life we are not to understand the life-giving soul, but the air which we breathe out [respiratus]. Or it may be said that in him as yet there was not the spirit of life, that is the soul, as to its manifest and complete operations.

**Reply to Objection 2.** If the soul of the Blessed Virgin had never incurred the stain of original sin, this would be derogatory to the dignity of Christ, by reason of His being the universal Saviour of all. Consequently after Christ, who, as the universal Saviour of all, needed not to be saved, the purity of the Blessed Virgin holds the highest place. For Christ did not contract original sin in any way whatever, but was holy in His very Conception, according to Lk. 1:35: “The Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.” But the Blessed Virgin did indeed contract original sin, but was cleansed therefrom before her birth from the womb. This is what is signified (Job 3:9) where it is written of the night of original sin: “Let it expect light,” i.e. Christ, “and not see it”—(because “no defiled thing cometh into her,” as is written Wis. 7:25), “nor the rising of the dawning of the

day,” that is of the Blessed Virgin, who in her birth was immune from original sin.

**Reply to Objection 3.** Although the Church of Rome does not celebrate the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, yet it tolerates the custom of certain churches that do keep that feast, wherefore this is not to be entirely reprobated. Nevertheless the celebration of this feast does not give us to understand that she was holy in her conception. But since it is not known when she was sanctified, the feast of her Sanctification, rather than the feast of her Conception, is kept on the day of her conception.

**Reply to Objection 4.** Sanctification is twofold. one is that of the whole nature: inasmuch as the whole human nature is freed from all corruption of sin and punishment. This will take place at the resurrection. The other is personal sanctification. This is not transmitted to the children begotten of the flesh: because it does not regard the flesh but the mind. Consequently, though the parents of the Blessed Virgin were cleansed from original sin, nevertheless she contracted original sin, since she was conceived by way of fleshly concupiscence and the intercourse of man and woman: for Augustine says (De Nup. et Concup. i): “All flesh born of carnal intercourse is sinful.”

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### Whether the Blessed Virgin was cleansed from the infection of the fomes?

IIIa q. 27 a. 3

**Objection 1.** It would seem that the Blessed Virgin was not cleansed from the infection of the fomes. For just as the fomes, consisting in the rebellion of the lower powers against the reason, is a punishment of original sin; so also are death and other corporeal penalties. Therefore the fomes was not entirely removed from her.

**Objection 2.** Further, it is written (2 Cor. 12:9): “Power is made perfect in infirmity,” which refers to the weakness of the fomes, by reason of which he (the Apostle) felt the “sting of the flesh.” But it was not fitting that anything should be taken away from the Blessed Virgin, pertaining to the perfection of virtue. Therefore it was unfitting that the fomes should be entirely taken away from her.

**Objection 3.** Further, Damascene says (De Fide Orth. iii) that “the Holy Ghost came upon” the Blessed Virgin, “purifying her,” before she conceived the Son of God. But this can only be understood of purification from the fomes: for she committed no sin, as Augustine says (De Nat. et Grat. xxvi). Therefore by the sanctification in the womb she was not absolutely cleansed from the fomes.

**On the contrary,** It is written (Canticles 4:7): “Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee!” But the fomes implies a blemish, at any rate in the flesh. Therefore the fomes was not in the Blessed Virgin.

**I answer that,** on this point there are various opin-

ions. For some have held that the fomes was entirely taken away in that sanctification whereby the Blessed Virgin was sanctified in the womb. Others say that it remained as far as it causes a difficulty in doing good, but was taken away as far as it causes a proneness to evil. Others again, that it was taken away as to the personal corruption, by which it makes us quick to do evil and slow to do good: but that it remained as to the corruption of nature, inasmuch as it is the cause of transmitting original sin to the offspring. Lastly, others say that, in her first sanctification, the fomes remained essentially, but was fettered; and that, when she conceived the Son of God, it was entirely taken away. In order to understand the question at issue, it must be observed that the fomes is nothing but a certain inordinate, but habitual, concupiscence of the sensitive appetite. for actual concupiscence is a sinful motion. Now sensual concupiscence is said to be inordinate, in so far as it rebels against reason; and this it does by inclining to evil, or hindering from good. Consequently it is essential to the fomes to incline to evil, or hinder from good. Wherefore to say that the fomes was in the Blessed Virgin without an inclination to evil, is to combine two contradictory statements.

In like manner it seems to imply a contradiction to say that the fomes remained as to the corruption of nature, but not as to the personal corruption. For, according to Au-

gustine (*De Nup. et Concup. i.*), it is lust that transmits original sin to the offspring. Now lust implies inordinate concupiscence, not entirely subject to reason: and therefore, if the fomes were entirely taken away as to personal corruption, it could not remain as to the corruption of nature.

It remains, therefore, for us to say, either that the fomes was entirely taken away from her by her first sanctification or that it was fettered. Now that the fomes was entirely taken away, might be understood in this way, that, by the abundance of grace bestowed on the Blessed Virgin, such a disposition of the soul's powers was granted to her, that the lower powers were never moved without the command of her reason: just as we have stated to have been the case with Christ (q. 15, a. 2), who certainly did not have the fomes of sin; as also was the case with Adam, before he sinned, by reason of original justice: so that, in this respect, the grace of sanctification in the Virgin had the force of original justice. And although this appears to be part of the dignity of the Virgin Mother, yet it is somewhat derogatory to the dignity of Christ, without whose power no one had been freed from the first sentence of condemnation. And though, through faith in Christ, some were freed from that condemnation, according to the spirit, before Christ's Incarnation, yet it does not seem fitting that any one should be freed from that condemnation, according to the flesh, except after His Incarnation, for it was then that immunity from condemnation was first to appear. Consequently, just as before the immortality of the flesh of Christ rising again, none obtained immortality of the flesh, so it seems unfitting to say that before Christ appeared in sinless flesh, His Virgin Mother's or anyone else's flesh should be without the fomes, which is called "the law of the flesh" or "of the members" (Rom. 7:23,25).

Therefore it seems better to say that by the sanctification in the womb, the Virgin was not freed from the fomes in its essence, but that it remained fettered: not indeed by an act of her reason, as in holy men, since she had not the use of reason from the very first moment of her ex-

istence in her mother's womb, for this was the singular privilege of Christ: but by reason of the abundant grace bestowed on her in her sanctification, and still more perfectly by Divine Providence preserving her sensitive soul, in a singular manner, from any inordinate movement. Afterwards, however, at the conception of Christ's flesh, in which for the first time immunity from sin was to be conspicuous, it is to be believed that entire freedom from the fomes redounded from the Child to the Mother. This indeed is signified (Ezech. 43:2): "Behold the glory of the God of Israel came in by the way of the east," i.e. by the Blessed Virgin, "and the earth," i.e. her flesh, "shone with His," i.e. Christ's, "majesty."

**Reply to Objection 1.** Death and such like penalties do not of themselves incline us to sin. Wherefore though Christ assumed them, He did not assume the fomes. Consequently in order that the Blessed Virgin might be conformed to her Son, from "whose fulness" her grace was derived, the fomes was at first fettered and afterwards taken away: while she was not freed from death and other such penalties.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The "infirmity" of the flesh, that pertains to the fomes, is indeed to holy men an occasional cause of perfect virtue: but not the "sine qua non" of perfection: and it is quite enough to ascribe to the Blessed Virgin perfect virtue and abundant grace: nor is there any need to attribute to her every occasional cause of perfection.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The Holy Ghost effected a twofold purification in the Blessed Virgin. The first was, as it were, preparatory to Christ's conception: which did not cleanse her from the stain of sin or fomes, but rather gave her mind a unity of purpose and disengaged it from a multiplicity of things (Cf. Dionysius, *Div. Nom. iv*), since even the angels are said to be purified, in whom there is no stain, as Dionysius says (*Eccl. Hier. vi*). The second purification effected in her by the Holy Ghost was by means of the conception of Christ which was the operation of the Holy Ghost. And in respect of this, it may be said that He purified her entirely from the fomes.

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**Whether by being sanctified in the womb the Blessed Virgin was preserved from all actual sin?**

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IIIa q. 27 a. 4

**Objection 1.** It would seem that by being sanctified in the womb the Blessed Virgin was not preserved from all actual sin. For, as we have already stated (a. 3), after her first sanctification the fomes remained in the Virgin. Now the motion of the fomes, even if it precede the act of the reason, is a venial sin, albeit extremely slight, as Augustine says in his work *De Trinitate*\*. Therefore there was some venial sin in the Blessed Virgin.

**Objection 2.** Further, Augustine (*Qq. Nov. et Vet. Test. lxxiii on Lk. 2:35*: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce") says that the Blessed Virgin "was troubled with wondering doubt at the death of our Lord." But doubt in matters of faith is a sin. Therefore the Blessed Virgin was not preserved from all actual sin.

**Objection 3.** Further, Chrysostom (*Hom. xlv in Matth.*) expounding the text: "Behold thy mother and thy

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\* Cf. *Sent. ii, D, 24*

brethren stand without, seeking thee,” says: “It is clear that they did this from mere vain glory.” Again, on Jn. 2:3: “They have no wine,” the same Chrysostom says that “she wished to do them a favor, and raise herself in their esteem, by means of her Son: and perchance she succumbed to human frailty, just as did His brethren when they said: ‘Manifest Thyself to the world.’” And a little further on he says: “For as yet she did not believe in Him as she ought.” Now it is quite clear that all this was sinful. Therefore the Blessed Virgin was not preserved from all sin.

**On the contrary,** Augustine says (De Nat. et Grat. xxxvi): “In the matter of sin, it is my wish to exclude absolutely all questions concerning the holy Virgin Mary, on account of the honor due to Christ. For since she conceived and brought forth Him who most certainly was guilty of no sin, we know that an abundance of grace was given her that she might be in every way the conqueror of sin.”

**I answer that,** God so prepares and endows those, whom He chooses for some particular office, that they are rendered capable of fulfilling it, according to 2 Cor. 3:6: “(Who) hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament.” Now the Blessed Virgin was chosen by God to be His Mother. Therefore there can be no doubt that God, by His grace, made her worthy of that office, according to the words spoken to her by the angel (Lk. 1:30,31): “Thou hast found grace with God: behold thou shalt conceive,” etc. But she would not have been worthy to be the Mother of God, if she had ever sinned. First, because the honor of the parents reflects on the child, according to Prov. 17:6: “The glory of children are their fathers”: and consequently, on the other hand, the Mother’s shame would have reflected on her Son. Secondly, because of the singular affinity between her and Christ, who took flesh from her: and it is written (2 Cor. 6:15): “What concord hath Christ with Belial?” Thirdly, because of the singular manner in which the Son of God, who is the “Divine Wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:24) dwelt in her, not only in her soul but in her womb. And it is written (Wis. 1:4): “Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body

subject to sins.”

We must therefore confess simply that the Blessed Virgin committed no actual sin, neither mortal nor venial; so that what is written (Cant 4:7) is fulfilled: “Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee,” etc.

**Reply to Objection 1.** After her sanctification the fomes remained in the Blessed Virgin, but fettered; lest she should be surprised by some sudden inordinate act, antecedent to the act of reason. And although the grace of her sanctification contributed to this effect, yet it did not suffice; for otherwise the result of her sanctification would have been to render impossible in her any sensual movement not preceded by an act of reason, and thus she would not have had the fomes, which is contrary to what we have said above (a. 3). We must therefore say that the above mentioned fettering (of the fomes) was perfected by divine providence not permitting any inordinate motion to result from the fomes.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Origen (Hom. xvii in Luc.) and certain other doctors expound these words of Simeon as referring to the sorrow which she suffered at the time of our Lord’s Passion. Ambrose (in Luc. 2:35) says that the sword signifies “Mary’s prudence which took note of the heavenly mystery. For the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12).

Others again take the sword to signify doubt. But this is to be understood of the doubt, not of unbelief, but of wonder and discussion. Thus Basil says (Ep. ad Optim.) that “the Blessed Virgin while standing by the cross, and observing every detail, after the message of Gabriel, and the ineffable knowledge of the Divine Conception, after that wondrous manifestation of miracles, was troubled in mind”: that is to say, on the one side seeing Him suffer such humiliation, and on the other considering His marvelous works.

**Reply to Objection 3.** In those words Chrysostom goes too far. They may, however, be explained as meaning that our Lord corrected in her, not the inordinate motion of vain glory in regard to herself, but that which might be in the thoughts of others.

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**Whether, by her sanctification in the womb, the Blessed Virgin received the fulness of grace?**

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IIIa q. 27 a. 5

**Objection 1.** It would seem that, by her sanctification in the womb, the Blessed Virgin did not receive the fulness or perfection of grace. For this seems to be Christ’s privilege, according to Jn. 1:14: “We saw Him [Vulg.: ‘His glory’] as the Only-Begotten [Vulg.: ‘as it were of the Only-Begotten’] full of grace and truth.” But what is proper to Christ ought not to be ascribed to some one else. Therefore the Blessed Virgin did not receive the fulness of

grace at the time of her sanctification.

**Objection 2.** Further, nothing remains to be added to that which is full and perfect: for “the perfect is that which lacks nothing,” as is said Phys. iii. But the Blessed Virgin received additional grace afterwards when she conceived Christ; for to her was it said (Lk. 1:35): “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee: and again, when she was assumed into glory.” Therefore it seems that she did not receive the

fulness of grace at the time of her first sanctification.

**Objection 3.** Further, “God does nothing useless,” as is said *De Coelo et Mundo* i. But it would have been useless for her to have certain graces, for she would never have put them to use: since we do not read that she taught which is the act of wisdom; or that she worked miracles, which is the act of one of the gratuitous graces. Therefore she had not the fulness of grace.

**On the contrary,** The angel said to her: “Hail, full of grace” (Lk. 1:28); which words Jerome expounds as follows, in a sermon on the Assumption (cf. *Ep. ad Paul. et Eustoch.*): “Full indeed of grace: for to others it is given in portions; whereas on Mary the fulness of grace was showered all at once.”

**I answer that,** In every genus, the nearer a thing is to the principle, the greater the part which it has in the effect of that principle, whence Dionysius says (*Coel. Hier. iv*) that angels, being nearer to God, have a greater share than men, in the effects of the Divine goodness. Now Christ is the principle of grace, authoritatively as to His Godhead, instrumentally as to His humanity: whence (*Jn. 1:17*) it is written: “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” But the Blessed Virgin Mary was nearest to Christ in His humanity: because He received His human nature from her. Therefore it was due to her to receive a greater fulness of grace than others.

**Reply to Objection 1.** God gives to each one according to the purpose for which He has chosen him. And since Christ as man was predestinated and chosen to be “predestinated the Son of God in power... of sanctification” (*Rom. 1:4*), it was proper to Him to have such a fulness of grace that it overflowed from Him into all, according to *Jn. 1:16*: “Of His fulness we have all received.” Whereas the Blessed Virgin Mary received such a fulness of grace that she was nearest of all to the Author of grace; so that she received within her Him Who is full of all grace; and by bringing Him forth, she, in a manner, dispensed grace to all.

**Reply to Objection 2.** In natural things at first there is perfection of disposition, for instance when matter is perfectly disposed for the form. Secondly, there is the perfection of the form; and this is the more excellent, for the heat that proceeds from the form of fire is more perfect than that which disposed to the form of fire. Thirdly, there is the perfection of the end: for instance when fire has its

qualities in the most perfect degree, having mounted to its own place.

In like manner there was a threefold perfection of grace in the Blessed Virgin. The first was a kind of disposition, by which she was made worthy to be the mother of Christ: and this was the perfection of her sanctification. The second perfection of grace in the Blessed Virgin was through the presence of the Son of God Incarnate in her womb. The third perfection of the end is that which she has in glory.

That the second perfection excels the first, and the third the second, appears (1) from the point of view of deliverance from evil. For at first in her sanctification she was delivered from original sin: afterwards, in the conception of the Son of God, she was entirely cleansed from the fomes: lastly, in her glorification she was also delivered from all affliction whatever. It appears (2) from the point of view of ordering to good. For at first in her sanctification she received grace inclining her to good: in the conception of the Son of God she received consummate grace confirming her in good; and in her glorification her grace was further consummated so as to perfect her in the enjoyment of all good.

**Reply to Objection 3.** There is no doubt that the Blessed Virgin received in a high degree both the gift of wisdom and the grace of miracles and even of prophecy, just as Christ had them. But she did not so receive them, as to put them and such like graces to every use, as did Christ: but accordingly as it befitted her condition of life. For she had the use of wisdom in contemplation, according to *Lk. 2:19*: “But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.” But she had not the use of wisdom as to teaching: since this befitted not the female sex, according to *1 Tim. 2:12*: “But I suffer not a woman to teach.” The use of miracles did not become her while she lived: because at that time the Teaching of Christ was to be confirmed by miracles, and therefore it was befitting that Christ alone, and His disciples who were the bearers of His doctrine, should work miracles. Hence of John the Baptist it is written (*Jn. 10:41*) that he “did no sign”; that is, in order that all might fix their attention on Christ. As to the use of prophecy, it is clear that she had it, from the canticle spoken by her: “My soul doth magnify the Lord” (*Lk. 1:46*, etc.).

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### Whether after Christ, it was proper to the Blessed Virgin to be sanctified in the womb?

IIIa q. 27 a. 6

**Objection 1.** It would seem that it was proper for the Blessed Virgin, after Christ, to be sanctified in the womb. For it has been said (a. 4) that the Blessed Virgin was sanctified in the womb, in order that she might be worthy to be the mother of God. But this is proper to her. Therefore

she alone was sanctified in the womb.

**Objection 2.** Further, some men seem to have been more closely connected with Christ than Jeremias and John the Baptist, who are said to have been sanctified in the womb. For Christ is specially called the Son of

David and of Abraham, by reason of the promise specially made to them concerning Christ. Isaias also prophesied of Christ in the most express terms. And the apostles were in converse with Christ Himself. And yet these are not mentioned as having been sanctified in the womb. Therefore it was not befitting that either Jeremias or John the Baptist should be sanctified in the womb.

**Objection 3.** Further, Job says of himself (Job 31:18): “From my infancy mercy grew up with me; and it came out with me from [my mother’s] womb.” Nevertheless we do not for this reason say that he was sanctified in the womb. Neither therefore are we bound to say that Jeremias and John the Baptist were sanctified in the womb.

**On the contrary,** It is written of Jeremias (Jer. 1:5): “Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee.” And of John the Baptist it is written (Lk. 1:15): “He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”

**I answer that,** Augustine (Ep. ad Dardan.) seems to speak dubiously of their (Jeremias’ and John the Baptist’s) sanctification in the womb. For the leaping of John in the womb “might,” as he says, “signify the great truth,” viz. that the woman was the mother of God, “which was to be made known to his elders, though as yet unknown to the infant. Hence in the Gospel it is written, not that the infant in her womb believed, but that it ‘leaped’: and our eyes are witness that not only infants leap but also cattle. But this was unwonted because it was in the womb. And therefore, just as other miracles are wont to be done, this was done divinely, in the infant; not humanly by the infant. Perhaps also in this child the use of reason and will was so far accelerated that while yet in his mother’s womb he was able to acknowledge, believe, and consent, whereas in other children we have to wait for these things till they grow older: this again I count as a miraculous result of the divine power.”

But since it is expressly said (of John) in the Gospel that “he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb”; and of Jeremias, “Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee”; it seems that we must needs assert that they were sanctified in the womb,

although, while in the womb, they had not the use of reason (which is the point discussed by Augustine); just as neither do children enjoy the use of free will as soon as they are sanctified by baptism.

Nor are we to believe that any others, not mentioned by Scripture, were sanctified in the womb. For such privileges of grace, which are bestowed on some, outside the common law, are ordered for the salvation of others, according to 1 Cor. 12:7: “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit,” which would not result from the sanctification of anyone unless it were made known to the Church.

And although it is not possible to assign a reason for God’s judgments, for instance, why He bestows such a grace on one and not on another, yet there seems to be a certain fittingness in both of these being sanctified in the womb, by their foreshadowing the sanctification which was to be effected through Christ. First, as to His Passion, according to Heb. 13:12: “Jesus, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate”: which Passion Jeremias foretold openly by words and by symbols, and most clearly foreshadowed by his own sufferings. Secondly, as to His Baptism (1 Cor. 6:11): “But you are washed, but you are sanctified”; to which Baptism John prepared men by his baptism.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The blessed Virgin, who was chosen by God to be His Mother, received a fuller grace of sanctification than John the Baptist and Jeremias, who were chosen to foreshadow in a special way the sanctification effected by Christ. A sign of this is that it was granted to the Blessed Virgin thence-forward never to sin either mortally or venially: whereas to the others who were thus sanctified it was granted thenceforward not to sin mortally, through the protection of God’s grace.

**Reply to Objection 2.** In other respects these saints might be more closely united to Christ than Jeremias and John the Baptist. But the latter were most closely united to Him by clearly foreshadowing His sanctification, as explained above.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The mercy of which Job speaks is not the infused virtue; but a certain natural inclination to the act of that virtue.