

The Presence of The Lady Mary in the Catholic Church Architecture in Mainland China and Hong Kong

Franky CHOI

Abstract: The Blessed Virgin Mary is Mother of the Church. She serves as intermediatrix and accompanies Christ as divine mediator for God and mankind. Marian veneration is a transnational and trans-sectoral movement, with Mariology the biblical-ecumenical-liturgical aspiration for the Oneness of our Church through her Silent Love. The three most recent popes all have urged the pilgrimage of faith towards Jesus Christ and Our Lady for the greatness and love of God.

Mary cooperates with God for the salvation of humanity. She represents God's human face, leading us into His ineffable mystery. Marian architecture is the actualization of Marian theology in the design and planning of the Catholic Church. This research paper illustrates the various approaches to presenting Our Lady in Catholic basilicas, cathedrals and churches, including the Vatican, China and Hong Kong, namely St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan and St. Ignatius Cathedral in Shanghai, and Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong.

By revealing their Marian architectural design rationale, aspirations and inculturation responses this paper seeks to strengthen

appreciation of Marian theology and devotion as well as the transcendent power of church architecture. Specific architectural topics include localization of design and elements, approach and accessibility, the axis, visual linkage and nodal space, along with the design of church façade, layout, main altar, sanctuary, chamber of chapels and grotto. In addition, this research suggests a guideline on the design of the Marian church be adopted, in order to address Marian architecture's key design principles on balance with local cultural heritage, the planning of Marian elements from external accessible paths to internal church layout, the versatility of Marian façade designs, and the cultivation of Marian ambience through such elements as artisanal art installations, shrines and grottoes, icons and sculptures, paintings and stained glass. Our Lady is the Mother of Hope. Her faith, hope, love and patience leads the communion of Christian communities throughout the history of our Church and humankind.

[摘要] 聖母瑪利亞是教會之母，她與基督相伴，以基督作為救主的唯一中保身分為天主和人類奉獻。恭敬聖母是一個跨國界及跨層面的宗教運動，聖母學是一門融合聖經、共融及禮儀的神學，以聖母沉默的愛為教會的合一作奉獻。最近的三位教宗非常強調信奉耶穌基督和聖母瑪利亞，以尋求天主的偉大和慈愛。

聖母瑪利亞建築學是將聖母學的神學，實現於天主教教堂的設計及規劃中。聖母是人類救恩的合作者，她代表天主的肖像呈現於人類的容貌，並引領我們進入祂不可言喻的奧妙之中。位於梵蒂岡、中國及香港的天主教大殿、座堂及聖堂，以多元化的方法呈現聖母瑪利亞。本研究包括梵蒂岡的聖伯多祿大殿、上海的佘山聖母大殿及聖依納

爵主教座堂、北京的聖母無染原罪主教座堂、救世主主教座堂及中國天主教神哲學院教堂，及香港的主教座堂及主要教堂。研究重點包括建築設計的理念性、獨特性、啟迪性及本地化的回應，藉此提升對聖母學的神學及恭敬，以及教會建築於時空中超驗性的認知。具體的建築主題包括：本地化的建築設計及建造元素、教堂的進路及可達性、設計軸線、視覺連繫、空間節點、教堂建築立面、空間佈局、主祭台、至聖所、小教堂及聖母岩。

聖母瑪利亞教堂設計方針及規範，以聖母瑪利亞建築學的研究為基礎，構建主要設計原則，其中包括平衡本地文化的傳承，策劃由教堂室外通道至室內佈局中，聖母建築學的元素，設計多元化的教堂立面，以各種形式培育聖母瑪利亞的氛圍，其中包括工匠性的藝術裝置、祭壇、聖母岩、聖像、雕塑、畫像及彩繪玻璃等。

在總體佈局的層面，可循有機性建築的哲學，將教堂建築群組與基地特性結合優化，或可融入本地文化精髓，例如中軸對稱並疊序有致的佈置，以增加本地化特點。在視覺連繫的層面，可於建築軸線的朝向，以及在室外與室內的視覺軸線，配合與聖母相關的禮儀空間或裝置。在立面設計的層面，可透過藝術手法，將聖母像以立面浮雕或藝術裝置呈現，視覺效果的美感成為傳教的媒體。在教堂佈置的層面，可於主祭台後方的主牆上裝置耶穌與聖母像的馬賽克瓷塊，在合適的空間設置聖母小教堂，或安裝聖母生命歷程的畫像或彩繪玻璃等。在聖母岩的層面，可以整體教堂佈局為首，依序以信仰為重的原則，將聖母岩及周邊環境以聖化教友為目標，創造莊重的禮儀空間及宗教氛圍。聖母瑪利亞是希望之母，她以信、望、愛及忍耐導向基督徒的團體，在教會及人類的歷史中達至和諧共融。

1 Introduction

Our Lady, silent disciple of Jesus, is the Mother of God.¹ Mary is the woman of salvation, Pope Francis proclaims, symbol of hope and unity in our Church.² She is the purest human being, related to Christ by blood and serving as a mediatrix³ in and through Christ who is the divine mediator for God and mankind. The uniqueness of her holy status entrusts Mary with an irreplaceable place in the Church and the hearts of the faithful. Our Lady is Mother of the Church, and Mariology transcends the framework of ecclesiology while associate with it.⁴ The Marian dimension secures the place of affectivity in faith with a fully human correspondence to the reality of the incarnate Logos, Pope Benedict XVI states, and Mary's representation of the Church is related as *factum and mysterium facti* that gives the fact its meaning.⁵

Pope Paul VI reaffirmed in 1974 that Mary was our model as “she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God (cf. Luke 1:38)... She is worthy of imitation because she was

1 At the Council of Ephesus in the year 431 Mary was declared Mother of God. It was Pope Paul VI, in 1974, who restored this solemnity to January First. Pope Francis dedicated his first homily of 2020 to the figure of Mary on the very day the church celebrates her as Mother of God.

2 Vatican News, “Pope on Feast of Mary, Mother of God: The dignity and gifts of women,” *Vatican News*, 1 January 2020.

3 Pope Pius XII, *Encyclical Ad Caeli Reginam* (On Proclaiming The Queenship of Mary) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1954), no. 51.

4 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, trans. Adrian Walker, *Mary: The Church at the Source* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 29.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 27-30.

the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples. All of this has a permanent and universal exemplary value.”⁶ How her silent love enlightens and strengthens the Christian faith of our Church inspires the central question of this paper: Is the Silent Love of Our Lady essential to striving for Oneness of the Church?

Pope Benedict XVI emphasises the equilibrium among the respective energies of the biblical-ecumenical-liturgical movement and the Marian movements.⁷ Marian presence in our Church life is directly related to the pilgrimage of faith towards Jesus Christ throughout her whole life. For Pope Francis the image of Mary in the Gospels of “keeping all things in the heart” challenges Christians to discern “how to see with the heart.”⁸ This provokes ‘Faith Seeking Understanding’ on the knowledge from the Holy Spirit to the greatness and love of God.⁹

Our Church grows with Our Lady in her pilgrimage of faith, and representation of her in our Church rekindles our imitation of her as the eschatological icon of our Church. The intertwining of spiritual, physical and liturgical presence is essential; in the words of Pope

6 Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus* (for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974), no. 35.

7 Ratzinger and von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, p. 25.

8 Vatican News, “Pope on Feast of Mary, Mother of God”.

9 Pope Francis, “General Audience on 21 May 2014”, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140521_udienza-generale.html.

Benedict, “everything said about the ecclesia in the Bible is true of her, and vice versa: The Church learns concretely what she is and is meant to be by looking at Mary.”¹⁰ This spiritual inspiration towards Our Lady cultivates an image for religious commemoration. Pope John Paul II stated that art can represent God’s human face and lead one into His ineffable mystery. “[V]enerable and holy images... of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ as well as those of Mary Immaculate, the *Holy Theotokos*, the honourable angels and all holy and pious people are to be exposed in the holy churches of God.”¹¹

In order to put this theological presence of Our Lady into Church practice, I reflect in this paper on the presence of Our Lady in Roman Catholic Church architecture, exploring the Oneness of our Church through Mary’s silent love. My first task is to delineate in Marian architecture the presence of Our Lady in Rome, Mainland China and Hong Kong. Next, I examine characteristics of Marian architecture, then offer recommendations of architectural theology and practice. Finally, I consider Marian holiness through the silent love of Our Lady and the Oneness of the Church.

10 Ratzinger and von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, p. 66.

11 Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Duodecimum Saeculum* (on the Occasion of the 1200th Anniversary of The Second Council of Nicaea) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), no.101.

2 Marian Architecture

Before delineating the presence of Our Lady in Marian architecture found in Mainland China and Hong Kong, I wish to describe that of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome.

2.1 The Presence of Our Lady in St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican (see picture 1)¹²

The Vatican represents the heart of our Church in its earthly presence. St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican contains extensive devotion towards the presence of Our Lady. The categories of presentation can mainly be constituted by altars, chapels in grottoes, artisanal artwork, domes, pillars and monuments which are related to Church architecture in terms of spatial planning and formation as well as religious quality and presentation.

The approach of Marian devotion has been formulated over centuries concerning its quality and quantity, scale and proportion, style and presentation with spiritual, liturgical and religious mindset to harmonize the integration of Marian veneration. Architecture and Catholic religion intermingle, in turn fostering the sense of "God-with-us"¹³ with both divine and human dimensions of Jesus Christ as elucidated by Pope John Paul II.

¹² All photos in this article, unless indicated otherwise, were taken by the author in 2018-2019.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, "General Audience of November 5, 1997", in Pope John Paul II, *Theotokos: Woman, Mother, Disciple - A Catechesis on Mary, Mother of God* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2000), p. 257. (Hereafter cited as *Theotokos*.)

The unique liturgical quality of Marian altars and grottoes helps create a solemn ambience for the most intimate participation of both individuals and communities in Marian venerations, contemplations and prayers. The sense of embrace is enhanced by the magnificent dome structures with artisanal mosaic artwork that elevates the spirit of the faithful towards the New Heaven and New Earth. Michelangelo's *Pietà* which depicts Our Lady holding in her lap the body of the crucified Christ is located in the first grotto on the right hand side as one passes through the Basilica's entrance and adjacent to the Holy Door. This most significant location is reserved for the adoration to Jesus Christ and veneration to Mary, signifying the emphasis of our Church towards the relationship of humankind with Jesus Christ as mediator and Mary as intermediatrix.

Mary as co-operator¹⁴ for the salvation of humanity is conveyed with the statue of *Pietà*. Such depiction leads all the faithful in the sublimation of spiritual sensitivity towards our covenantal relationship with God. The monumental nature of giant pillars – at once structure and artwork — creates a striking, sensational impact that cultivates a devotional attitude towards the holiness of our Church. The spirit of the Vatican's architectural effect is an inspirational empowerment to the faith, hope and love of the faithful all over the world.

14 Pope John Paul II, "General Audience of April 9, 1997", in *Theotokos*, p. 286.

2.2 The Presence of Our Lady in the Church in China

2.2.1 National Shrine and Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan, Shanghai (see pictures 2a and 2b)

Sheshan Minor Basilica¹⁵ is located in a green space with the basilica built atop the mount, while spread out below it are mid-hill church, three holy pavilions, tower of friar and an outdoor stations of the cross. The religious context of Sheshan Basilica is vibrant and versatile. The sensational experience of pilgrimage ascending from the base is enhanced with the architectural climax set upon the peak. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: (i) the statues at pinnacle of the basilica's bell tower, sanctuary, mid-hill church, holy shrine; (ii) the painting at the basilica's north auxiliary altar of the transept; and (iii) the stained glass of the basilica.

Our Lady of Sheshan is the iconic representation of the Mother Church in China and its statue is set at the pinnacle of the church bell tower. Mary Help of Christians is the patroness of Sheshan Basilica, and this statue is placed at the main altar under the dome with Jesus Christ's image as the focal point along the longitudinal axis of the building. The Marian painting is placed at the auxiliary altar along latitudinal axis of the transept fronting the southward side entrance. Visitors from either main or side entrance enjoy an unobstructed and continuous view of the icon of Mary and Jesus Christ. Mary Help of Christians is presented

¹⁵ In 1942, Pope Pius XII elevated the Sheshan Church to the rank of minor basilica, and in 1946, the Holy See crowned the statue of Our Lady of Zose (Sheshan) at the apex of the tower.

at the mid-hill church as well, and statues of Mary are further installed at the piazza of mid-hill church and the three holy shrines. The icons and statues are set as key visual foci of all congregation areas in the place-making process.

2.2.2 Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Beijing

[also known as South Church] (see picture 3)

The original foundation of the Cathedral was set in 1605 by the Jesuit Fr. Matteo Ricci who was the first parish priest. The reconstructed building was served as the Cathedral alternatively with the Church of the Saviour at different periods. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: (i) the outdoor grotto at entrance courtyard; (ii) the painting at the Cathedral sanctuary; and (iii) the stained glass of the Cathedral.

The outdoor grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes with water pond and fountain is built at the entrance courtyard adjacent to the Cathedral. ‘Ave’ (萬福) is engraved in Chinese calligraphy upon the grotto stone that serves as the statue’s plinth. Its location is a welcoming invitation to receive all the faithful to the church. Inside the Cathedral, the huge painting of Our Lady is set at the primary wall behind the main altar where the holy cross is the most essential vista. When the pair of central doors is opened, the image of Mary is visually extended to the front courtyard facilitating outdoor liturgical events. The veneration of Mary via holy rosary is held fronting the main altar and the icon of Mary.

2.2.3 Cathedral of the Saviour, Beijing

[also known as the North Church] (see picture 4)

While the Cathedral was originally established by the Jesuits in 1703, the latest neo-gothic style church building was renovated in 2019 and has since become the seat of the Bishop of Beijing. The symmetrical site planning sets up a formal access route leading from the front gate towards the front courtyard of the Cathedral. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: (i) the outdoor grotto at entrance courtyard; (ii) the statues at the Cathedral sanctuary and chambers; and (iii) the stained glass of the Cathedral.

The outdoor grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes with water pond and fountain is set at the right side adjacent to one of two Chinese pavilions housing the Chinese emperor's stone-carved steles for the authorization of Catholic Church development in Beijing. The faithful can experience a unique fusion of East and West cultures. Inside the Cathedral, stained-glass windows on either side introduce the story of the Bible and the history of our Church in China, respectively. Our Lady is included in the thematic storyline on the birth of our Church as stated in the Acts of the Apostles. The stained glass directly above the Sanctuary is the holy rosary illustrating the life of Jesus Christ, of which Our Lady is the main theme from the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary of the birth of Jesus Christ to the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven. This puts emphasis on the importance of Mary in her communion with the Church

since its beginning. The main statue of Mary is located at the right side of the main altar which signifies her superior status. Chapel in the grottoes and sculptures dedicated to Mary are properly located around the sanctuary in order to interlink the veneration of Mary with the salvation of Jesus Christ. A local docent's introduction to appreciation of the Cathedral architecture enhances the nourishment of religious spirit of the faithful.

2.2.4 National Seminary of Catholic Church in China, Beijing (see picture 5)

The church adopts a 'Temple of Heaven' theme with a circular-shaped church design that conveys ancient Chinese imperial and cultural character. A mural wall featuring religious themes is designed around the church façades with reference to the key themes of the Bible and Jesus Christ. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: the stained glass of church.

Inside the church, the main altar has as its stained glass backdrop the Annunciation of Mary, making it the focus along its central axis. The other stained-glass windows have the twelve disciples of which the communion of Mary with disciples embraces the church with a concentric passion united in the love of Jesus Christ.

2.2.5 St. Ignatius Cathedral, Shanghai (see picture 6)

After the first church was built in 1851, the Jesuits re-developed it in 1906 as the grandest church in the Far East.

The Cathedral has a large civic landscape garden beyond the front courtyard. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: (i) the outdoor grotto at entrance courtyard; (ii) the statues and paintings at the Cathedral chamber; (iii) The stained glass of the Cathedral; and (iv) the banners along nave.

The outdoor grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes is set in the green landscape zone at the right side of the Cathedral with seating under shade trees. Inside the Cathedral, every grand pillar lining the nave is decorated with banners illustrating Our Lady in various titles. Along both side aisles, numerous chambers dedicated to Mary are equipped with Marian shrines for personal prayer. Rose window with stained glass depicts Mary and other disciples. Artisanal artwork elevates the spirit of the faithful through religious architecture. The extensive accommodation of Marian theme is exceptional, and the spatial planning is carefully coordinated to achieve a harmonious religious quality.

2.3 The Presence of Our Lady in the Hong Kong Church

2.3.1 Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

(see picture 7)

The Cathedral was established in 1888 with various stages of alteration and addition throughout the next century. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: (i) the holy cross of the Cathedral; (ii) the statues at the Cathedral radiating chapel; (iii) the outdoor grotto at alcove recessed building corner of the Cathedral.

The presence of Our Lady is incorporated at the Holy Cross above the main altar, and both images of Our Lady and St. John¹⁶ are painted alongside the hands of Jesus Christ. At the radiating chapel zone of the Cathedral, two chambers are dedicated to Mary with religious sculptures. Due to the internal partition at the Apse and seating orientation at the Cathedral, these two chapels are not visually interlinked to the main and side entrances and the main altar, nave and side aisles. The outdoor grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes has been relocated from the forecourt space in front of the formal entrance of the Cathedral to the alcove recessed building corner formed by the building profile of the axial chapel and radiating chapel at the far-right end of the Cathedral. This new grotto, however, faces the storage workshop of the church complex directly, while a gathering space around the grotto is limited and congested due to reservation of a zone for vehicular and pedestrian circulation beyond.

According to research findings, the original Marian grotto¹⁷ was located at the left side of the Cathedral in the front courtyard facing the main entrance of the Cathedral in 1950s. This created a visual connection to the faithful before entering the Cathedral and at the same time it provided ample open space for veneration.

16 夏其龍，〈走進主教座堂看教會歷史〉（香港：聖母無原罪主教座堂，2008），頁18，31。[Louis Ha, *Stepping into the Cathedral to read Church History* (Hong Kong: Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 2008), pp. 18, 31.]

17 *Ibid.* As per 1950s the Cathedral photo with highlight on its location.

2.3.2 Holy Spirit Seminary and Queen of China Chapel

(see picture 8)

The Seminary was founded in 1930 by the Holy See and transferred to the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong in 1964. Within that timeframe, in 1956, the Queen of China Chapel was built in classical Chinese architectural style to match the seminary's design theme. Marian presence is arranged in the following manner: (i) the grotto at central courtyard of seminary premises; (ii) the mosaic image at entrance foyer of church; and (iii) the sculpture adjacent to the altar of chapel.

At the Queen of China Chapel, a mosaic of Our Lady with Jesus Christ is installed on the left, just inside the chapel entrance. At the chapel of the Holy Spirit Seminary, a Marian statue in terra cotta is placed adjacent to the altar. A large-scale outdoor grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes is built at the main courtyard of the Seminary along the central axis of the original entrance of the seminary. The grotto has an extensive structure which can accommodate the faithful inside. Apart from the Marian statue, the statue of eye-witness St. Bernadette Soubirous is presented inside the grotto which enhances the physical sensation and spiritual inspiration towards the I-Thou relationship with the Marian apparition event. Due to its proximity to the seashore, some seashells collected from the shore are painted in white colour and applied to decorate the grotto as a localized character. A Chinese-style lily pond is built adjacent to the grotto. With its centralized location, the grotto becomes an anchoring vista for the seminary.

2.3.3 Parishes

In addition, the presence of Our Lady can be seen in most parishes across Hong Kong in the form of Marian statues, grottoes, icons, paintings, stained glass windows, artwork and artisanal media at both indoor and outdoor venues. Due to limited space, however, they will not be shown in this article.

3 Characteristics of Marian Architecture

Bishops at the Second Vatican Council stated that the respectful veneration of Our Lady “honoured under the title of Mother of God.”¹⁸ Pope John Paul II subsequently urged the devotion “*is most favourable to the worship of the incarnate Word, the Father and the Holy Spirit.*”¹⁹ Moreover, Marian veneration is affirmatively adopted as an extension of liturgy itself and positive contribution towards its overall enrichment.²⁰ Our Lady expresses her affection to all the faithful as her children at a spiritual level. Marian statue expresses the message of grace²¹ which is a key symbol of the blessing and presence of God. The use of tangible physical objects is to transcend the intangible spiritual reality, and the Marian statue has a spectrum of presentation in accordance

18 Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church Lumen Gentium* (1964), no. 66.

19 Pope John Paul II, “General Audience of October 22, 1997”, in *Theotokos*, p. 249.

20 Pope John Paul II, “General Audience of November 5, 1997”, in *Theotokos*, p. 255.

21 Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Mother of Redeemer* (on the Blessed Virgin in the Life of the Pilgrim Church) (Boston: The Daughters of St. Paul, 1987), p. 18.

with her honours and titles, which can be categorized in four general streams based on the composition, namely Our Lady herself, Mary with Jesus Christ, Mary with the Holy Family, Mary in biblical and liturgical moments.

Our Lady is with God and Jesus Christ at all times, and her statue and icon are the mirror reflecting the love of God, through her upward gaze towards God high up in heaven, repetition of prayer, grace of rosary, communion of saints, welcoming with God's mercy and sharing of God's grace. The image of Our Lady embraces the face of God sharing the infinite grace of God through its visible sign of God, radiating her fidelity and filial love towards God with all cardinal virtues in a humble manner.

Ever since Christian belief was proclaimed by foreign missionaries in Hong Kong in the 19th century, the momentum of localization of Marian elements has been reflected in the following manners:

3.1 Localization of Marian Elements

3.1.1 Localized Modified Design

In Church design and religious art production, there are three approaches, namely direct, modified and new types. Direct design type is the adoption of the preferred design principles prevailing at the time from the source place. Modified design type is a hybrid approach inserting local design and craftsmanship element to resemble the preferred design as far as possible. New design type is a totally new approach with the key essence maintained in concept.

Marian Grotto design in Hong Kong is a modified design type imitating the spatial quality of the cave at Lourdes. The original grotto is a natural cave rock with carved-in cave recess into which people can walk and experience both drop in temperature and change of light intensity. The cave's mysterious nature creates a sense of adventure and exploration. A water fountain hand dug by eye-witness St. Bernadette Soubirous provides long-running spring water from the cave. In Hong Kong, due to the limitations of space and cost, the Marian grotto is built by imitating the spirit of the original one. A cave-like structure is constructed using local stone or slate that captures a minimized visual version of the original, absent the accessibility to walk into the Grotto. A water pond, sometimes with water fountain, is provided at some grottoes to represent the cave spring in spirit. The objective is to arouse the sensation of the authentic one for spiritual contemplation. It is a modified approach to the one introduced by French missionaries more than a century ago.

3.1.2 Localized Chinese Style and Material

Especially in the early time of Hong Kong church development, local faithful have favoured Marian images, statues and icons created in Chinese style and using media and material that echo local culture and practice. Artists have fashioned Our Lady paintings with Chinese *yin* and *yang* symbols, Chinese style wooden or porcelain statues, as well as Our Lady of China dressed in traditional clothing resembling Chinese imperial finery. Marian elements could be sculpted in vernacular materials such as terra cotta, porcelain

and Chinese species of wood thus showcasing the influence of local vernacular aspiration.

3.2 The Approach and Accessibility

The pilgrimage to the Temple of God, our Church, is a self-transcendence in a mindful, spiritual and physical manner. Pope John Paul II stated that Our Lady as the Church's own beginning at the fullness of the moment utters "the first fiat of the New Covenant" that prefigures the Church as spouse and mother.²² In order to enliven her pilgrimage of faith, the following aspects should be planned carefully during church development stage:

(i) the sequence of approach; (ii) the presentation of religious elements; (iii) the overview of spiritual and functional zoning; and (iv) the spatial planning of sacred space and circulation path.

The sequence of approach should be coordinated with the presentation of religious elements along the key access route from the access point at the site's boundary to the formal church entrance. This is the first pilgrim path along which experience-creating and place-making concern is cultivated. Religious context, spiritual embrace and spatial ambience are essential in fostering the first impression and the heart of adoration for all the faithful. For churches with entrance courtyards or access paths, the opportunity comes from the placement of Marian- and Holy Trinity-related religious elements at the entrance point, pathway, courtyard,

²² Pope John Paul II, *Mother of Redeemer*, 6.

landscape garden and Marian grotto space. Circulation routes where the journey of pilgrimage begins should be designated primordially for interlinkage with church functions. The concerns of walkability and functionality are to be merged with the sensation of spirituality, as this is the prelude before liturgical adoration inside the church.

3.3 The Axis, Visual Linkage and Nodal Space

As per the captioned concern on access routes to the church, the following architectural and planning matters should be specially considered in the process of church design: (i) the vista focus and visual connection; (ii) the ambience of sacred space and place; (iii) the creation of a sacred communal node; and (iv) the display of sacred elements.

The key visual focal points for the installation of Marian statuary can be identified by evaluating the weighting of religious value of the location. The Marian statue could be placed at the axial focus fronting the key circulation direction. All pedestrian circulation paths should be planned coherently so that every circulation focal nodes could become visible and accessible. Marian features can foster a sense of distinctive sign that facilitates memory identification of the place. The visual synthesis could integrate with the orientation of access and spiritual contemplation along the approach towards the church. Moreover, the sacred Marian veneration space can be planned along the circulation path for contemplation both before and after attending liturgical event at the church. The designation of nodal space should be clear from key circulation path in order to achieve the right balance for both functions, and ample

sacred zone should be reserved around the node of sacred statue. This focal node can be served as gathering space for Christian community of which outdoor courtyard, patio and foyer are adequate comprehensive functional spaces with the characteristic of versatility to accommodate Marian presence as focal node. Furthermore, the integration of Marian presence with nodal spaces can sanctify both the faithful and church venue dually. The sacred blessing offers an ambience of grace fulfilling the purpose of sanctifier and be sanctified. For a parish church integrated with school premises, it is preferable to set aside an independent route from entrance to the church to meet the aspiration of various users during school operations.

3.4 The Façade

The solemn façade of the church is the interface communicating the message of God to local communities. Marian presence is the image of Christ that relates to the covenantal love of God.²³ Spreading the good news of the Gospel with artisanal artwork is definitely an effective medium for all the faithful as well as pedestrians or vehicular passers-by. Marian artwork can be mounted on the façade in various format as follows: (i) the protruding art-piece mounted on building structures; (ii) the profiled mural wall or painting artwork; (iii) the stained glass or artwork display unit; and (iv) the creative façade profile for statue or icon installation.

23 United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and John Reumann (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 292-293.

The Church design with special awareness on the integration of Marian façade design element at all orientations around the church as visual linkage to the surrounding cityscape is essential. Every feature of the church should be regarded as a tool for the propaganda of faith and belief in a meaningful way. Artist with in-depth enrichment of religion value, preferably as a Christian, is encouraged to design art-piece with a diligent Marian contour echoing the content of the Bible. Innovative building portfolio is encouraged to accommodate Marian image, statue or icon at the church facade. Special awareness to pedestrian level context is equally essential as this Marian element can become a starting point on the route of pilgrimage before entering the church entrance.

3.5 The Church, Main Altar, Sanctuary and Chamber of Chapels

Marian presence is unique and has a tradition of placing the Virgin Mary's statue at the Main Altar and Sanctuary, Radiating Chapel and Chamber of Chapel. Its proximity to the Main Altar highlights Our Lady's sacrosanct dignity and her statue is a visible synthesis of all dimensions of our faith. The setup of the church should keep in mind the following aspects: (i) The Cathedral and the churches named under Our Lady and related titles; (ii) The permanent and temporary statue and icon at Main Altar & sanctuary; (iii) The Marian Shrine and Chamber of Chapel; and (iv) The sacred congregation space.

For the cathedral and the churches named under Our Lady, it is most anticipated that apart from the adoration of the Holy Trinity, Mary should be the major focus of veneration. One of the approaches is to place her statue or icon with Jesus Christ abutting the axial wall at Apse behind the Main Altar in order to express the Oneness of our Church. The National Shrine and Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai exemplifies this sacred setting solemnly. In Hong Kong, the parish churches including Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Our Lady of Fatima Church, Rosary Church, Mother of Good Counsel Church, Holy Family Church, and Annunciation Church adopt a similar approach with various kinds of Marian statues. Moreover, the church door with the image of Jesus Christ and Our Lady is the Church Tradition reserved by the Orthodox Church²⁴ that signifies her importance. The cathedral and the churches bearing her name are recommended to adopt this church main door design.

Secondly, it is most preferable to have Marian Radiating Chapel, chamber or outdoor statue for religious events especially the Holy Rosary. The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Hong Kong and the other parish churches have offered similar provisions. Thirdly, it is essential that the sacred statue of Our Lady be visually connected to the Main Altar where the holy communion of Jesus Christ occurs. This could be achieved by setting a permanent statue

24 楊鳴章，〈從敬禮聖像到敬禮祖先神位的探討〉，《神學年刊》第1期（香港：聖神修院神哲學院，1977），頁42-57。Michael Yeung, “From the Veneration to the Holy Statues to Paying Homage to the Ancestors’ Tablet”, *Theology Annual* 1 (1997): pp. 42-57.

of Our Lady at the Sanctuary in accordance with the Church Tradition and liturgical practice.²⁵ The location could be set at the fore-corner of Sanctuary or at the side of main altar so that most of the faithful can connect with Our Lady throughout the liturgical event. Fourthly, in order to facilitate Catholic feast liturgy, the location for a temporary Marian icon could be pre-empted to facilitate the church operation. For instance, St. Ignatius Cathedral in Shanghai adopts an extensive approach by covering giant pillars along the central nave with banners featuring Marian images of various titles. Prominent locations are to be reserved at the church design stage to serve this purpose. Moreover, Marian Shrine and Chamber of Chapel are recommended to be installed close to the Main Altar or Transept as a proper venue for Marian veneration. Furthermore, the church is an agglomeration of sacred congregation spaces with statue of Jesus Christ, Our Lady and saints.

The Marian dimension has three unique characteristics:²⁶

- (i) Personalized: the Church as a person and in person;
- (ii) Incarnational: the unity of bios, person, and relation to God; the ontological freedom of the creature vis-à-vis the Creator and of the ‘body’ of Christ relative to the head;
- (iii) Affective: fixes faith in the deepest roots of humankind.

²⁵ The traditional church practice is to accommodation statues of both Mary and Joseph at the fore-corners of sanctuary.

²⁶ Ratzinger and von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, p. 34.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ and His salvific love expressed through the salvation at the Holy Cross is the most essential element in the Church Liturgy. The Main Altar must be the concentric focus for the entire Church Architecture as per the directive of the Second Vatican Council. All Marian elements must be Christocentric towards this highest respect of liturgical moment at the Main Altar. It is highly recommended that Marian statuary and icons, around the Main Altar and along its longitudinal and latitudinal axial vista at Apse and Transept respectively, be integrated harmoniously with the image of Jesus Christ for the Oneness of our Church. Apart from the Main Altar zone, there should be appropriate religious spaces for congregational or personal veneration at other parts of the church in order to address the mentioned Marian dimension.

3.6 The Grotto

The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes represents profound Marian piety as per the apparition of Our Lady. This outdoor religious element is independent from the official liturgical setting of the church as it is considered that Lourdes is one of the locations where the Marian apparition occurs. With the prevailing dedicative prayer towards Mary in front of the Grotto and its prominent profile, the Grotto is regarded by most of the faithful as one of the major veneration places of the church. Central concern on Grotto design involves: (i) The precincts and proportion; (ii) The ambiance and characteristic.

Most of the Marian Grottoes are designed with green landscaped surrounding; some have a water pond and even fountain echoing in spirit the water feature and fountain of the original Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. The ideal location is aside the church entrance to encapsulate personal integration physically, mindfully and spiritually, and to reserve appropriate congregation space for Holy Rosary or contemplation, meditation and general prayer in groups.

Secondly, the proportion of Marian Grotto should be complementary to the building scale of the Cathedral or the church, while the style of Grotto should adhere to the authentic Grotto as per original intent. Thirdly, the ambience of Grotto is variably subject to the Grotto's setting, the extent of covered zone, placement of flowering, landscaping, ornament, etc. Mary is the shadow of Jesus Christ with the Grotto crafting a sign of the Virgin out of the shadow and coolness of the place. The movement of water as spring or fountain symbolises the wellspring of life, while the movement in-and-out of the Grotto signifies the death-to-resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Grotto is accessible and touchable enhancing the full sensation of experience which echoes the nature of our Church to be experienced in a participatory manner. The Grotto should be an integrated part of the church in the initial overall planning stage of the church for a coherent environment in a sustainable manner.

4 Recommendations of Architectural Theology and Practice

Marian veneration is a Christocentric piety intertwined with individual pilgrimage of faith. With the aim of creating a guideline for Marian church design by the author, this section serves to highlight good practices from all the basilicas, cathedrals and parish churches visited for the stated themes as part and parcel of demonstrating the intermingling of theory and practice. It does so, moreover, in the hopes that the new church design excel and elaborate the application of the proposed guideline. Meanwhile, the art form of Marian Madonna is subject to the status and approach of veneration, including the apocalyptic ideology of Our Lady's apparitions,²⁷ multi-facet characteristic as per her titles, Church Tradition²⁸ and liturgical practice of the time.

27 The key Marian apparitions including Lourdes, La Salette, Fatima, Medjugorje, etc.

28 "...Blue represents heaven and heavenly love, and it has become the colour associated with Mary as Queen of Heaven." Marian signs and symbols including Fleur-de-lis as a stylized representation of the lily is symbolic of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven; Iris or called sword lily as an allusion to Mary's suffering at the passion of Christ in representation of the Immaculate Conception; Lily as a symbol of purity associated with the Virgin Mary appearing particularly in depictions of the Annunciation; Rose, white and without thorns, indicating the purity of Mary free of sins, as thorns of the fall. Stars, circle of twelve depicts the Immaculate Conception and of Mary as Queen of Heaven [Rev.12:1]. See Patricia S. Klein, *Worship Without Word: The Signs and Symbols of Our Faith* (Massachusetts, Orleans: Paraclete Press, 2006), p. 63.

4.1 The Approach and Accessibility

In terms of the overall site planning, the National Shrine and Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai (see picture 9) demonstrates an organic approach by strategically arranging religious buildings and elements according to the mount contour. The Cathedral of the Saviour in Beijing provides a monumental and symmetric layout in accordance with classic Chinese architectural design principles and the Temple of Heaven for its site planning, spatial variation and architectural theology.

4.2 The Axis, Visual Linkage and Nodal Space

The importance of visual linkage can be quoted from the crowning ceremony of Marian statue of Our Lady of Sheshan by The Holy See in 1946.²⁹ This iconic statue is tailor-made as the Queen of China at the pinnacle of Cathedral bell tower (see picture 2a) which is visible from afar.

In Hong Kong, the Mother of Christ Church (see picture 10) has explicitly designed a Marian Shrine at the outdoor Entrance Courtyard along the central axis of the church. The statue faces the glass church entrance facade directly so that it is always visually linked with the interior space of the Church. The ample courtyard space offers a spatially versatile venue for multi-functional religious activities.

²⁹ “Sheshan Basilica of Mary Help of Christians”, *The Journal of Christian Art and Architecture YAGE* 3, no.1 (2009): 22-26.

Besides, the Star of the Sea Church (see picture 11) has the Marian sculpture at the Patio and the Marian Grotto at an outdoor Courtyard of which both are visible from the interior of the church through its clear glass facade. Our Lady of Fatima statue is placed at multi-function hall facing the entrance. All the faithful from both main and secondary routes enjoy visual connection with the Marian statues.

4.3 The Façade

All the buildings mentioned above in China are classified as monuments, such that the classic church façade serves as a landmark. In contrast, Hong Kong's church façade design has a greater degree of flexibility and opportunity for either new construction or alteration to the existing church. Our Lady of Lourdes Church (see picture 12) boasts an effective school façade for the installation of a Marian mural commemorating the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The beautiful and colourful art piece offers the best illustration of Marian apparition enlivening the religious spirit. The formal school entrance has a Marian statue facing public roadwork and pavement for closer intimacy with general citizens. Our Lady of China Church (see picture 13) abuts a flyover and neighbouring pocket park, classic Hong Kong urbanscape. Its large-scale artisanal metallic artwork outlining the silhouette of Our Lady is installed at the façade, delivering her blessings to both vehicular users and pedestrians.

4.4 The Church, Main Altar, Sanctuary and Chamber of Chapels

In China, the expression of Marian sacred elements in the basilica, the cathedrals and the churches (see pictures 14 and 15) visited is extensive and elaborate. In Hong Kong, the following churches have special features worth referencing:

- St. Joseph's Church (see picture 16) has an exceptional large-scale Marian mural icon installed adjacent to the mural icon of the cross behind main altar, and there are various large-scale Marian paintings around sanctuary in her storyline theme.
- St. Teresa's Church (see picture 17a and b) displays a large-size Marian icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the right transept. Mural wall of Our Lady with her rosy symbol is built at the apse. A classic Marian shrine is set at the chamber of chapel, and a modern outdoor Marian artwork is set within a landscaped garden with seating for contemplation. The wide variety and style of Marian elements create an ambience of grace and blessing empowering the participation of the faithful.
- The Annunciation Church (see picture 18) has extensive Marian icons in form of a mural wall at the sanctuary behind its main altar and with stained glass of Our Lady at all sides. The whole church is embraced by her colourful lifeline and grace.

- The Mother of Good Counsel Church (see picture 19) has a spectrum of Marian elements including Façade artwork, Chinese and Western paintings, statues, mosaic icon images, metal artworks, Chinese-style Marian statuary and wood-carved sculptures throughout the church including the sanctuary, main altar, office, staircase and outdoor courtyard.

The author would like to advocate for the empowerment of the Marian ambience through the installation of Marian elements in the format of colour-matching mural wall or statue integrated with both Our Lady and Jesus Christ at the Apse wall of the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception in Hong Kong. A similar approach can be referenced with The papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome of which a mosaic mural wall combining the image of both Jesus Christ and Mary is presented at the dome of apse (see picture 20). Alternatively, the statues of both Mary and Joseph could be accommodated at the fore-corners of sanctuary as per the traditional church practice. These recommendations aim at enriching the Marian content and enhancing the visibility of Marian elements, and most importantly expressing the Oneness of our Church through the supreme intimacy and sublimity of both Jesus Christ and Our Lady, as Mary performs the dual roles of both the Mother of God and the perfect disciple of Jesus Christ. The unity

and oneness of the mystery of Jesus Christ can be further enhanced along the central vista of the Cathedral. The statue of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was relocated from the apse to the radiating chapel, with a new holy cross installed above the central main altar in 2008. The main altar represents Jesus Christ and the presentation of Marian elements is the communion of the Mother and the Son for the unity in worshipping God.

As there are currently many statues of saints around the main altar and sanctuary, and the image of Mary at the holy cross is of the same scale as that of St. John. The emphasis on the Marian dimension is important in order to distinguish her uniqueness from the general sainthood. Moreover, God offering His salvation to humankind through the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ liturgically reappears at the sacred main altar. The main altar is the focus of oneness which is best expressed through the harmonious communion of God and humankind through Jesus Christ and Our Lady. Meanwhile, due to the existence of a partition wrapped around the Apse, the direct sightlines from the Cathedral main entrance, nave, transept and both aisles towards the two Marian statues at the two radiating chapels are blocked either fully or partially. Furthermore, the direct visibility of the Marian elements by the faithful during Mass or liturgical events are essential especially this Cathedral is named under Our Lady.

4.5 The Grotto

The cathedrals in Beijing and Shanghai have grottoes³⁰ with their own spacious, designated, landscaped and solemn veneration spaces incorporated in close proximity to main entrances.

The Cathedral of Immaculate Conception (see picture 7) in Hong Kong has its original Marian Grotto constructed at the immediate left-side of Entrance Patio in 1950s with a designated fenced zone for the faithful. As stated in the exhibition of Cathedral timeline, it was demolished in 1969 to cope with the liturgical movement after the Second Vatican Council. It is worth noticing that the movement was Christocentric focus in general, while it was only the grotto at the Cathedral being demolished but not all the grottoes in Hong Kong or around the world, therefore, it is regarded as a matter of re-considering the location or presentation of this particular Grotto at the Cathedral. It was then re-built in 1981 at an outdoor alcove recessed area at the far right-side of Cathedral structure in-between the building profile of axial chapel and radiating chapel without any information on the delayed years, and was further renovated in 2002 at its current location. It is visible from the secondary side access path only with a restricted and limited space due to the reservation

³⁰ The apparition of the Blessed Virgin to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes on February 11, 1858, led to the establishment of a Marian shrine that has become the modern centre of Marian devotion throughout Christendom. See Kathleen Coyle, *Mary in the Christian Tradition: from a Contemporary Perspective* (Manila: Logos Publications Inc., 1996), p. 112.

of traffic and pedestrian circulation spaces around, as well as the access to the storage workshop fronting this grotto. Due to the importance of the Marian Grotto in the church architecture, the author advocates an architectural enrichment of the ambience design and planning review of the existing Marian grotto and its surrounding, spatial and building context in order to derive a higher priority for the spiritual solemnity of a graceful Marian veneration space for Our Lady at the Cathedral, with cross reference to the other Marian veneration spaces in the basilicas and the cathedrals in Vatican and China, for the spiritual betterment of most of the faithful.

The Marian grotto at the Holy Spirit Seminary (see picture 8) illustrates a unique design approach with it being located on the central axis along the original main entrance of the Seminary. Everyone faces directly towards the grotto when entering the seminary, and its centralized location guarantees its visibility all day long. The grotto is one of the largest in Hong Kong which allows the faithful to walk into the precinct, and this enhances the sensation of embrace, protection and shelter that resembles the spirit of the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes as close as feasible. Seashells are collected at the sea front around the seminary and painted in white colour as add-on decoration; this local cultural art approach progressive morphs into a cross-fusion of local culture at religion front. The flower-lined walkway and lily pond adjacent to the grotto encourage an appreciation of nature for the preparation of prayer at the grotto with a vivid sense of Marian presence.

5 The Marian Holiness

5.1 Our Faith, Our Hope, Our Love

The author proposes humbly the guideline on Marian church design for consideration, with the good will to envision a better church and iconography design. The core of this tangible Marian sign is Christo-centric which links to the intangible Catholic faith for the wellbeing of the faithful and all humankind. Our Lady has her lifeline stated in the Bible, her Apparition is a continuation of her participation in our earthly church under the ‘already but not yet’ notion for the eternal heavenly church. This is an extension of the covenantal love of God for all humanity through God’s special relationship with Our Lady,³¹ as she is the best human model for imitation through her communion with our Church, and her life is a practice of faith by mediating in her heart for the event of salvation.³²

In every Apparition of Our Lady, she has been asking humankind for repentance and reconciliation with the Holy Rosary to sublime the belief. At the foot of the Holy Cross, Mary faced the most challenging moment in her life - the mystery of the death of Jesus Christ. With the presence of the redeeming sacrifice, the hope of the Church and of humanity was born in Mary. Hope comes with dignity and justice by triumphing the dark side of humanity. Our Lady

31 Pope John Paul II, “General Audience of November 5, 1997”, in *Theotokos*, p. 255.

32 Pope John Paul II, “General Audience of April 2, 1997”, in *Theotokos*, pp. 227-228.

is the Mother of Hope as she empowers the faithful to await the forthcoming of God's kingdom through the threat of persecution.³³ Her intensity of faith, hope, love and patience leads the communion of Christian communities throughout the history of our Church.

Our Lady with radiant charity, maternal love, fraternity and harmony fulfils her apostolic commitment on the mission of the Church for the regeneration of humankind.³⁴ Her willingness to fulfil the divine plan of Jesus Christ's salvation work in silence is an exceptional dedication.³⁵ Love creates the community of the faithful and cultivates communion of holiness in union with Christ.³⁶ This prevailing and enduring love becomes the leading force for our Church in journey. Pope Benedict XVI views that the deepest nature of our Church is expressed in a three-folded task: the proclamation of God's word [kerygma], celebration of the sacraments [leiturgia] and exercise of the ministry of charity [diakonia].³⁷ Hope is the innermost trust and love in God by revealing through the pierced heart of Jesus Christ on the Cross.³⁸ Love of Our Lady is the treasure of our Church expressed

33 *Ibid.*

34 Pope John Paul II, "General Audience of September 3, 1997", in *Theotokos*, p. 184.

35 Pope John Paul II, "General Audience of November 5, 1997", in *Theotokos*, p. 255.

36 Pope John Paul II, "General Audience of April 2, 1997", in *Theotokos*, pp. 227-228.

37 Thomas P. Rausch, *Faith, Hope, and Charity: Benedict XVI on the Theological Virtues* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2015), p. 38.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

through her ‘yes’ to God’s plan which is united with the ‘yes’ of Jesus Christ intrinsically. The holiness of Our Lady in union with Jesus Christ grants her the power of grace which belongs to God alone. She sits at the right hand of Jesus Christ who sits on the right hand of the majesty Lord on the highest. She became our gracious patron offering protection and guidance against all dangers (Pius IX, *Bull Ineffabilis*).³⁹

5.2 The Oneness of Silent Love

The silent love Our Lady in her daily journey accompanies our Church in journey, “*and Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart*” (Luke 2:19). She offers her love that “*grew in silence during life in Nazareth and reached perfection at the moment of sacrifice.*”⁴⁰ The *Kenosis* of Jesus Christ is the deepest faith, hope and love that intermingles intimately with Mary.⁴¹ Our Lady has the same life-sacrificing *Kenosis* as Jesus. She lives up the true meaning of *Kenosis* with the climax of I-Thou covenantal love by accompanying her Son Jesus Christ silently at the Holy Cross (Jn19:26-27). Jesus Christ self-empties Himself and passes his last word to Mary to behold all His people.

39 Pope Pius X, *Encyclical Letter Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (on the Immaculate Conception) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1904), no. 14.

40 Pope John Paul II, “General Audience of April 2, 1997”, in *Theotokos*, pp. 227-228.

41 Pope John Paul II, *Mother of Redeemer*, 25.

The essence of *Kenosis* intermingles ‘Silence’ and ‘Love’ into ‘Silent Love’ for the greater glory of God. God is the initiator of *Kenosis* and Silent Love has the power of revelation to lead devotion fully towards God and Jesus Christ, for God’s will and covenant, and the goodness of humankind. God interacts with His creation but does not overrule its divinely granted freedom to be itself.⁴² Incarnational theology refers to Jesus Christ as the Divine Word empties [*ekenosen*] himself through self-limitation and takes the form of finite humankind (Philippians 2:7). At the beginning of creation is *Kenosis*, God permits the wayward freedom of divine nature.⁴³ Mary at her free will confirmed ‘yes’ to God for the greater salvation plan of God. Her Silent Love is forever that contributes for the Oneness of our Church and all humankind. She follows I-Thou guidance and steps of *Kenosis* in a humble manner for the sake of driving the Oneness.

Our Lady is superior to other saints so as her veneration of the faithful.⁴⁴ Pope Francis encourages the faithful to pray before the image of Our Lady⁴⁵ as they are the visible

42 John C. Polkinghorne, “Kenotic Creation and Divine Action”, *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, London: SPCK, 2001), p. xii.

43 Keith Ward, “Cosmos and Kenosis”, *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, London: SPCK, 2001), p. 166.

44 Pope John Paul II, “General Audience of October 22, 1997”, in *Theotokos*, p. 249.

45 Pope Francis. *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia* (on Love in the Family) (Vatican: Vatican Press, 2016), pp. 163-164.

presence of God⁴⁶ with whom we worship.⁴⁷ The honour of Our Lady interlinks to the honour of her divine Son.⁴⁸ “... while the Mother is honoured, the Son, through whom all things have their being and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, is rightly known, loved and glorified and that all His commands are observed.” [LG 66]. The submission of Our Lady to God is expressed in her totality and self-giving from Annunciation through the establishment of the Church as stated in the Bible, and her continuing role for God through her Apparitions in our current life. “*The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary... that encouraged by this maternal help they may the more intimately adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer.*” [LG 62]. The humanity of the Incarnation was enlivened through the motherhood of Our Lady, predestined by the decree of divine providence, by her offering of human life and the upbringing of Jesus Christ. Her full obedience, charity, poverty and fulfillment of all the virtues of the Beatitudes became the role model for Jesus Christ on His human nature side, and for Catholic orders on spiritual side.

46 James F. White and Susan J. White, *Church Architecture – Building and Renovating for Christian Worship* (Ohio, Akron: OSL Publications, 1998), pp. 125-128.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

48 Joseph M. Champlin, *Inside a Catholic Church: A Guide to Signs, Symbols and Saints* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), p. 112.

Just as the Mother of Jesus Christ and our Church “was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to His disciple with these words: ‘Woman, behold thy son’” [LG 58], Our Lady’s motherhood unites all the faithful for the Oneness of the Body of Jesus Christ. The faithfulness, submission and intercession stemming from the maternal love of Our Lady are the spiritual qualities of the Marian dimension for our life-long learning. “A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” (Rev 12:1) Our Lady is the holy one as well as our role model and companion along the path towards Holiness.

God is the architect of our life. “We are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.” [LG 67]. May we all learn to imitate Jesus Christ through the silent love of Mary, by offering our best endeavour in the enshrinement and veneration⁴⁹ of The Holy Mother throughout Christendom for the greater glory of God! *Ecce! Fiat! Magnificat!*

49 Patricia S. Klein, *Worship Without Words*, p. 62.

Appendix



Picture 1 : Pietà, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican.

Picture taken by Franky Choi in 2016.

*All photos, except picture 2b and 20, were taken by Franky Choi the author in 2018-19.



Picture 2a : The statue of Mary and Infant Jesus at pinnacle of the basilica's bell tower of the Shrine & Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Sheshan, Shanghai



Picture 2b : A close-up of the statue
Photo courtesy: Peter Potrowl at Wikimedia Commons
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shanghai_-_Basilique_de_She_Shan_-_31.jpg

This file is licensed under the Creative Commons
Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.



Picture 3 : Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Beijing
(South Church)



Picture 4 : Cathedral of the Saviour, Beijing (North Church)



Picture 5 : National Seminary of Catholic Church, Beijing



Picture 6 : St. Ignatius Cathedral, Shanghai



Picture 7 : Marian grotto at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception, Hong Kong



Picture 8 : Marian grotto at the Holy Spirit Seminary, Hong Kong



Picture 9 : collage: National Shrine and Minor Basilica of
Our Lady of Sheshan, Shanghai
Greenery Path, Outdoor Marian Pavilion, Outdoor Stations of
the Cross



Picture 10 : Mother of Christ Church, Hong Kong



Picture 11 : Star of the Sea Church, Hong Kong



Picture 12 : Façade at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Hong Kong



Picture 13 : Our Lady of China Church, Hong Kong



Picture 14 : National Shrine & Minor Basilica of Our Lady of
Sheshan, Shanghai



Picture 15 : Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Beijing



Picture 16 : St. Joseph's Church, Hong Kong



Picture 17a,b : Marian shrine and mural wall of Our Lady with
rosy symbols at St. Teresa's Church, Hong Kong



Picture 18 : The Annunciation Church, Hong Kong



Picture 19 : The Mother of Good Counsel Church, Hong Kong



Picture 20 : The Papal Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome

Photo source: Jastrow at Wikimedia Commons

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Apse_mosaic_SM_Maggiore.jpg