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The Iconographic Type of the Coronation of the Virgin in the Renaissance Italian Painting in the Light of the Medieval Theology

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Abstract: This article highlights the artistic and conceptual relevance of the iconographic type of the Coronation of Mary in Italy during the Late Middle Ages and Early Modernity. We have analyzed 14 Italian Renaissance paintings, aiming to discover the possible doctrinal sources that inspire them. From a conceptual perspective, we have specified that the iconography of The Coronation of the Virgin in Italy is directly inspired by the comments of some Church Fathers and medieval theologians and hymnographers. From the formal perspective, we discover that three different iconographyc types complement each other as progressively more complex variants of a similar basic structure.

Keywords: Renaissance Art; Marian iconography; Coronation of the Virgin; theological sources; patristics; liturgical hymns

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1. Introduction

In the context of Christianity, the designation of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven began to appear as early as the 4th century in some patristic texts, which became more abundant in subsequent centuries with the increasingly explicit and enthusiastic contributions of numerous Church Fathers, and medieval theologians and hymnographers. Only much later, from the 10th century, the artistic (sculptural, and pictorial) representations of the Virgin as Queen become general. Initially, she appeared wearing a crown on her head, almost always in a seated position with the Child Jesus in her arms, as reflected in the iconographic type of *Sedes Sapientiae*. Finally, from the middle of the 12th century, the specific iconographic type of the Coronation of the Virgin Mary began to spread—first in sculpture, then in painting—, a topic that we will deal with in this article.

As we will see shortly, the Church justified granting Mary the title of Queen of Heaven—and, correlatively, the image of her Coronation in the heavenly Paradise—based on the dogma of her virginal divine motherhood. In fact, for the teachers of Christian doctrine, it was evident that Mary, being the mother of God the Son, King of Heaven, should also have royal status, and, therefore, deserve the dignity of being crowned as Queen of Heaven by who had the legitimate title of Emperor of Heavenly Glory.

Now, to approach rigorously the topic that we have focused on in this article, we will first analyze a wide series of texts by the Church Fathers and medieval theologians and liturgical hymnographers that concordantly outline the doctrine of celestial Queenship of the Virgin Mary, by designating her with some titles, such as Queen, Lady, or Sovereign. Secondly, we will analyze a large set of pictorial images of the Coronation of the Virgin produced by prestigious Italian Renaissance artists, based on this unanimous doctrinal corpus that we will expose in the first part of the article, through which we will justify our iconographic interpretation of the paintings. This comparative analysis of texts and images will ultimately allow us to draw some reasonable conclusions.

2. The Queenship of Mary According to Some Church Fathers and Medieval Theologians

The references by Church Fathers and medieval theologians and hymnographers designating the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven are numerous and especially meaningful throughout the centuries. For this reason, one can explain that from these explicit doctrinal pronouncements the correlative iconographic type of the Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven has subsequently emerged.

From the very first centuries of the Christian era, some Eastern and Western Church Fathers acknowledged to some extent the Queenship of Mary. Thus, towards the middle of the 4th century, St. Ephrem of Syria (306–373) designated the Virgin Mary with the significant titles of "Lady" and "Queen", titles that were later used by several other Church Fathers and Doctors. Similar treatments would be used half a century later by St. Jerome of Stridon (340–420). For the rest, the Council of Ephesus, held in June and July 431, established as a dogma that Mary is the true Mother of God (*theotókos*), which, as we suggested before, established the doctrinal bases that support the title of Mary as the Queen of Heaven: since she is the mother of the King of Heaven, Mary also rightfully deserves the title of Queen of Heaven.

That is why, as an expression derived from the dogma of the divine motherhood of Mary, proclaimed by the Council of Ephesus, the denomination of Queen in reference to Mary began to become frequent among Christian thinkers from the 6th century. In the centuries that followed, many Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers generalized—as we will see later—several endearing appellations such as Queen of Heaven, Queen of angels, Queen of saints, and other similar expressions to designate the Virgin. In fact, throughout the Middle Ages, many Christian thinkers highlighted, with more or less strength, the absolute supremacy of Mary over the angels and saints, to the point that they did not hesitate to affirm that all angelic hierarchies, saints, and all the blessed pay constant tribute of honor to the Virgin as their Sovereign in Heaven.

In this sense, the influential Eastern Church Father St. John of Damascus (c. 676–749), in a passage from his *Homily on the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, establishes an essential link between the category of Mary as Queen of Heaven and her virginal divine motherhood. Therefore, he enthusiastically proclaims:

> Hail, the only Queen among queens, you who are certainly a daughter of Kings, but also the Mother of the King of universe and strength of religious kings and emperors! Hail, the only Queen among queens, covered with a gold dress and with variety, such as David, the singer of the Psalms, exclaimed![1]

As if this were not enough, St. John Damascene in his *First homily on the feast of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary* insists on the idea that she went to the royal throne of his Son Jesus,

> staying next to him with great, inexplicable freedom, you [Mary], who are the happiness higher than any word for the Angels and all the Powers dominating the world, the everlasting delectation for the Patriarchs, the ineffable joy to the righteous and the perennial joy for the prophets.[2]

Three and a half centuries later in Europe, the conspicuous Benedictine master St. Anselm of Aosta (1033–1109), Archbishop of Canterbury and Church Doctor, decisively defends the doctrine of the Queenship of the Virgin. Thus, in a sermon on the Assumption, he states that Mary was praised as Queen of Heaven, and that precisely because of her condition as Heavenly Queen, she could more effectively exercise her role as intercessor before God in favor of those who invoke her. In such a sense, St. Anselm states convinced:

> You have been exalted over the choirs of angels, eternally happy and glorious Queen of Heaven, where you aid all those who glorify you as Lady and often invoke your holy name with humble prayer.[3]

In another paragraph of this homily, St. Anselm addresses the Virgin with this invocation:

> on the merits of your most salutary Nativity, Annunciation and virginal Birth, and on your most chaste Purification and your most glorious Assumption, may I be presented with a clean heart and pure body in the sublime palace of heaven, where you exult and reign as the glorious Queen of angels and men, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.[4]

Similarly, in a sermon on Christ and all the saints, St. Anselm acknowledges daring to pray to the Virgin Mary, whom, after noting that she gave birth to Jesus, salvation, life, and remedy for the lost world, he designates her as "Lady of the world and Queen of Heaven". Then he asks her to offer to his beloved Son Jesus the prayer that he (Anselm) is entrusting to her holiest and more maternal piety.[5] In his 45th homily in honor of the Virgin, the Archbishop of Canterbury exalts the mother of God in these confident supplications

> You are the honor of the world. You the nobility of the Christian people, oh, Queen and Lady of the world. Stairway to heaven, throne of God, gate of paradise, hear the prayers of the poor, do not despise the groans of the miserable.[6]

Finally, in another sermon in honor of Mary, St. Anselm insists on similar praises to the mother of God, begging for her protection with these warm praises: "Honor of the virgins, Lady of human beings, Queen of angels, source of the gardens, ablution of sinners, holy and perpetual Virgin, help the miserable, help the lost."[7]

Approximately half a century later the prestigious Cistercian master St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux (1090–1153), in his first sermon for the feast of the Assumption, highlights the huge happiness of the angels and the other saints in receiving Mary as their heavenly Queen. Bernard expresses it in these terms:

> Our Queen preceded us, preceded us, and was assumed [to heaven] in such a glorious way that her little servants follow her lady confidently asking: Lift us after you; we will run towards the smell of your perfumes (Cant, 1, 3). Our pilgrimage previously sent our advocate, who, as mother of the Judge and mother of mercy, will humbly and effectively deal with the matters of our [eternal] salvation.[8]

In another later passage of that sermon, the abbot of Clairvaux is amazed to see with what glory the Queen of the world, Mary, ascends to Heaven, and with what devotion a multitude of angels come out to meet her, leading her to the throne of glory with songs. And he is also amazed to see with what serene and placid face and with what divine hugs she is received by her Son and exalted above all creatures, with the honor corresponding to such a worthy mother and so convenient to her Son.[9]

Finally, in another sermon St. Bernard insists on exalting the royalty of Mary by expressing:

> That is why all generations proclaim you blessed (Luke I, 48), Mother of God, Lady of the world, Queen of heaven. All generations, I say. For there are generations of heaven and earth. [. . .] Therefore, then, all generations proclaim you blessed, you who gave birth to life and glory for all generations. Because in you the angels find joy, the just find grace, the sinners find eternal forgiveness.[10]

A little over a century later, the conspicuous Franciscan master St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1218–1274), who for his mysticism was called the "Seraphic Doctor" (*Doctor Seraphicus*), defends the Queenship of Mary in several passages. In this regard, in the fourth sermon on the Annunciation he states:

> By her nuptial union, the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God; by her royal throne, the Queen of Heaven; by her priestly ornament, the advocate of the human race. And for all these things the Virgin Mary was fit, being of the human species, of the lineage of kings and of the priestly caste. Say then the most holy Virgin Mary: *He who created me rested in my tabernacle*.[11]

In another subsequent passage of that homily, he insists on maintaining that the Blessed Virgin Mary has been made Queen of all, for which all must praise her, and all heavenly, terrestrial and infernal beings must honor her by kneeling before her.[12]

As if that were not enough, the Seraphic Doctor highlights in his second homily on the Assumption the Queenship of Mary by holding:

> [Mary] was, finally, ennobled over all saints regarding her excellence of dignity or condition; since, being the Mother of the Highest Emperor, she is by her dignity and conditions the worthiest of all creatures; and that is why not without reason she was elevated above them and placed to the right of her Son in a very sublime throne.[13]

Finally, in his sixth sermon on the Assumption, St. Bonaventure reaffirms the thesis of the royal status of Mary, addressing her with these words:

> Hurry, therefore, you will be crowned with a glorious crown, by which you will be made according to *the majesty of the eternal Father*, according to the saying of Isaiah 62: *You will be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a diadem of the kingdom in the hand of your God*. For she, the highest in glory above all others, shows herself as *in the hand of God* as an example of union and ignition of desire. For which she as Queen of heaven sits at the right of the eternal King, according to the saying of the Psalm: *The queen is present at your right in a dress of gold*, and is crowned with a crown similar to the crown of the eternal King.[14]

3. Mary the Queen of Heaven in Medieval Latin Liturgical Hymns

The official doctrine of the Church on the Queenship of the Virgin Mary, expressed by many Church Fathers and theologians—of which we have seen only a small sample in the preceding section—, was later eloquently illustrated in countless medieval liturgical hymns that, with various poetic tropes, exalt the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven.

The numerous fragments of hymns that we will present below are sufficiently clear and explicit in their formulations referring to the Queenship of the Virgin Mary as to not need further explanations: they are self-explanatory by their own words. Nevertheless, at the end of this Section 3, we shall try to make a brief summary of the main ideas and metaphors expressed by those hymns.

We will now present a selection of such hymns, beginning with the three most popular and widespread Marian antiphons, which are sung at the Divine Office throughout the year, namely *Regina caeli, laetare*, *Salve Regina*, and *Ave, Regina Coelorum*.

The 10th-century *Regina Coeli, laetare* antiphon—attributed to Pope Saint Gregory the Great, and sung in the Roman liturgy at Easter time—praises Mary thus:

> Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia.
> Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.
> Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia.
> Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.
>
> The Son you merited to bear, alleluia,
> Has risen as he said, alleluia.
> Pray to God for us, alleluia
> Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.

In turn, *Salve Regina*—the best known of the Marian antiphons, written around the 11th or 12th century, traditionally attributed to the German monk Hermann de Reichenau, although many consider it anonymous—extols the Virgin with these emotional pleas:

> Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiæ,
> vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
> Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevæ,
> Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes

in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia, ergo, advocata nostra, illos tuos
misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry,
Poor banished children of Eve;
To thee do we send up our sighs,
Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
Thine eyes of mercy toward us;
And after this our exile,
Show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

The *Ave Regina Coelorum* antiphon—inspired by St. Ephrem of Syria and St. Jerome, probably dating from the 12th century, and attributed to Saint Bernard or Herman of Reichenau—proclaims the Queenship of Mary in these stanzas:

Ave, Regina Coelorum
Ave, Domina angelorum,
Salve, radix, salve, porta
Ex qua mundo lux est orta.

Hail, O Queen of Heaven.
Hail, O Lady of Angels
Hail! thou root, hail! thou gate
From whom unto the world a light has arisen:

In addition to these three traditional antiphons incorporated into the Divine Office, numerous other Latin liturgical hymns also spread in the Middle Ages. Many of them have come down to us thanks to the tireless rescue work undertaken in the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th in the monastic and cathedral archives by the prestigious experts Franz Josef Mone, Guido Maria Dreves and Clemens Blume, who published the monumental collections that we quote below.

Mone collected many hymns from 1853 to 1855 in three volumes: the first, dedicated to God (Mone 1853); the second, to the Virgin Mary (Mone 1854); the third, to the saints (Mone 1855). Guido Maria Dreves edited between 1886 and 1898 the first 28 volumes of the impressive *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi* collection (55 volumes in total), of which he published from 1898 to 1907 alone or co-authored with Clemens Blume the following 22 volumes; Blume then continued this collection until 1922 with his last five volumes (Dreves et al. 1898–1922).

Now, as we have found a huge number of fragments of Latin liturgical hymns that allude to the Queenship of Mary, we have restricted to quoting only a selection extracted from the second volume of Mone (1854), to prevent this article from extending in too much. Thus, we will now transcribe some fragments of hymns from Mone's volume 2, with the numbering and title that he gives them in his book. We will quote the hymns in chronological sequence, to better appreciate the possible evolution in the way in which the Christian medieval liturgy expressed the devotion to the Queen of Heaven.

The Hymnus 352. Sancta Maria (from the 7th century, attributed to Venantius Fortunatus) thus addresses the maternal heavenly Sovereign:

Nunc tibi, virgo virginum,
laudes ferimus carminum
teque, caelorum regina,
resultet haec plebecula. (Hymnus 352)

Now, Virgin of virgins,
We bring you poetic praises,
And to you, Queen of Heaven,
This little mob may resonate with you.

Two verses later that anthem goes on to say:
Lacta regina parvulum,
aeterni regis filium,
lacta sacrato ubere,
qui te concessit vivere.

Tu clara stirpe regia
jureque mundi domina
desideratum omnibus
tu protulisti gentibus. (Hymnus 352)

Queen of children,
breastfeed the Son of the eternal King,
suckle with your sacred breast,
to whom he gave you life.

You are of clear royal lineage
And Lady of the world by right,
You spawned the Desired
of all peoples.

The Hymnus 340. De sancta Maria (nativitas) (from the 10th century) proclaims the royal greatness of the Virgin that way:

O sancta mundi domina,
regina coeli inclita,
o stella maris Maria,
virgo mater deifica! (Hymnus 340)

Oh holy Lady of the world,
illustrious Queen of Heaven,
oh Mary, star of the sea,
Virgin Mother of God!

The Hymnus 356. De sancta Maria (troparium) (from the 12th century) praises the Virgin with these stanzas:

Fecunda verbo
Tu virginum virgo,
Maria, dei
Mater inclyta, omni
Laude tu sola digna,

Dignare nos indignos
famulos te laudare,
regina coeli. (Hymnus 356)

You, Mary, Virgin of virgins
You were fruitful by the Word [Verb]
Immaculate Mother of God,
You are the only one
Worthy of all praise.

Let us, unworthy servants,
praise you,
Queen of Heaven.

The Hymnus 533. Ad beatam Virginem Mariam (from the 12th century) greets the Mother of God with these praises:

Ave stella matutina, CONFIRM
peccatorum medicina,
mundi princeps et regina,
esto nobis disciplina. (Hymnus 533)

Hail, morning star,
medicine of sinners,
Princess and Queen of the world,
be a discipline for us.

The Hymnus 504. Psalterium Mariae (from the 12th century) glorifies the Virgin with these verses:

Ave regina celebris,
de qua lumen in tenebris
exortum parit gaudium
in domibus fidelium. (Hymnus 504)

Hail, famous Queen,
from which the light was born
in the darkness gave birth to joy
in the houses of the faithful.

The Hymnus 360. De sancta Maria (from the 13th century) requests the protection of the Virgin with these prayers:

Placa mare maris stella,
ne involvat nos procella
et tempestas valida,

Sed ad coeli palatium
nostrum tu solatium
subleves, o pia
coeli regina. (Hymnus 360)

Calm the sea, star of the sea,
So that the storm and the strong storm
does not engulf us,

But lift up our consolation
to the sky palace
oh pious
Queen of Heaven.

The Hymnus 402. Prosa de beata Virgine (troparium) (from the 13th century) exalts Mary with these lyrical expressions:

Tu floris et roris,
panis et pastoris
virginum regina,
rosa sine spina
genitrix es facta. (Hymnus 402)

You, Queen of virgins
Of the flower and the dew,
Of the bread and the shepherd,
You have been made a mother,
thornless Rose,

The Hymnus 322. De beata virgine Maria (from the 14th century) salutes the heavenly Sovereign with these praises:

Salve mundi domina
et coeli regina,
mater dei integra,
rosa sine spina. (Hymnus 322)

Hail, Lady of the world
and Queen of Heaven,
Immaculate Mother of God,
rose without thorns.

The Hymnus 477. Item ad sanctam Mariam (from the 14th century) exalts the Virgin in these terms:

Gaude super sidera
sedens ut regina,
cujus fert imperia
omnis creatura. (Hymnus 477)

Rejoice, you who are sitting
Over the stars like a Queen,
from which every creature
take her orders.

The Hymnus 558. Oratio ad gloriosam Virginem Mariam (from the 14th century) addresses the Mother of God thus begging for her protection:

O domina dominarum,
regina reginarum,
propter tuam pietatem
pelle meam paupertatem. (Hymnus 558)

Oh, Lady of ladies,
Queen of queens,
for your mercy
throw away my poverty.

The Hymnus 591. Laudes Mariae Virginis (from the 14th century) greets the Mother of God with this sequence of compliments:

Ave virgo regia,
mater clementiae,
ave plena gratia,
regina gloriae,

genitrix egregia
prolis eximiae,
quae sedes in gloria
coelestis patriae,
regis veri regia
mater et filia. (Hymnus 591)

Hail, Royal Virgin,
clemency mother,
hail, full of grace,
Queen of glory,
egregious mother
of an eminent progeny,
sitting in glory
of the heavenly homeland,
royal mother and daughter
of the true King.

The Hymnus 392. Ave Maria in rhythmis (from the 15th century) glorifies the Virgin with these warm praises:

Ave regina beata,
quae es virgo consecrata,
Dei mater ordinata
ante mundi principium.

Maria coeli ducissa
virginum et principissa,
martyrum corona ipsa
et sanctis speculum. (Hymnus 392)

Hail, blessed Queen,
who are a consecrated Virgin,
ordained Mother of God
before the beginning of the world.

Mary, guide, and princess
of the virgins of heaven,
actual crown of the martyrs
mirror of the saints.

Some stanzas later this hymn goes on to say:

Tu regina imperatrix,
dei et nostrum mediatrix
ac moestorum consolatrix,
electa ab exordio. (Hymnus 392)

You are the Queen Empress,
mediator between God and us
and comforter of the sad,
chosen from the start.

The Hymnus 396. Super Ave Maria (from the 15th century) exalts the Virgin with these verses:

Benedicta domina,
regina coelorum,
tibi laudes agmina
cantant angelorum. (Hymnus 396)

Blessed Lady,
Queen of Heaven,
the armies of angels
sing your praises.

The Hymnus 418. Super cantico Magnificat. (from the 15th century) extols the Mother of God, while begging for her saving protection, with this stanza:

Nunc exulta, o regina,
flos rosarum sine spina,
fulgens stella matutina,
nos conserva a ruina,
mater Dei Maria! (Hymnus 418)

Now rejoice, oh Queen,
thornless rose flower,
bright morning star,
save us from ruin,
Mother of God, Mary!

The Hymnus 447. Assumptionis beatae Mariae Virginis (from the 15th century) celebrates the Assunta like this:

Regina mundi hodie
thronum conscendit gloriae,
illum enixa filium,
qui est ante luciferum. (Hymnus 447)

The Queen of the world today
ascended to the throne of glory,
making that Son shine
that exists before the morning star.

The Hymnus 481. De beata Maria Virgine (from the 15th century) greets the Mother of God that way:

Gaude regina beata,
super coelos exaltata,
mater juncta filio. (Hymnus 481)

Rejoice, blessed Queen,
exalted above the heavens,
Mother next to her Son.

The Hymnus 489. Super Salve regina (from the 15th century) addresses the Virgin, between praises and supplications, with these eloquent verses:

Salve nobilis regina,
fons misericordiae,
aegris vitae medicina,
lapsis vena veniae;
sitibundis nunc propina
nectar indulgentiae,
et quos culpae pungit spina,
medicamen gratiae. (Hymnus 489)

Hail, noble Queen,
source of mercy,

life medicine for the sick,
vein of forgiveness for the fallen
now the cup of drink offered to the thirsty
nectar of indulgence,
and medicine of grace for those
who were pricked by the thorn of guilt.

The Hymnus 490. De beata Virgine solemnis antiphona (from the 15th century) extols Mary with these praises:

Salve mundi domina,
regina coelorum,
sanctorum laetitia,
vita beatorum. (Hymnus 490)

Hail, Lady of the world,
Queen of Heaven.
The joy of the saints,
The life of the blessed.

The Hymnus 510. Ad beatam Mariam Virginem (from the 15th century) celebrates the maternal protection of the mother of God with these emotional verses:

O regina angelorum
atque mundi domina,
imperatrix infernorum,
hera sublimissima,
vera mater orphanorum,
piarum piissima,
vera salus infirmorum
sana mea vitia. (Hymnus 510)

Oh Queen of angels
And Lady of the world,
Empress of hell,
sublime Lady,
the true mother of the orphans,
the most pious of the pious,
the true health of the sick,
heal my vices.

The Hymnus 522. De beata Maria (from ca. the 15th century) glorifies the Virgin with this poetic stanza:

Salve mater speciosa,
super cunctis tu formosa,
sanctarum sanctissima:
salve stella matutina,
tu coelorum es regina,
virgo nobilissima. (Hymnus 522)

Hail, beautiful mother,
you are beautiful above all,
the holiest of saints:
hail morning star,
you are the Queen of Heaven,
the noblest Virgin.

As you can see, most of the liturgical hymns express numerous concepts and metaphors alluding to Mary's Queenship, with expressions such as Queen of heaven, of royal lineage, mother of the King of kings, Lady of the world, Queen of the world, Queen of virgins, Queen of queens, Lady of ladies, mother of the true King, Empress, Princess, blessed Queen exalted above Heaven, and so on

In this sense, the poetic formulations of these hymns fully reflect the most intellectually elevated ideas and doctrinal arguments of the Church Fathers and medieval theologians on Mary's Queenship. After all, the strict rational theses of the masters of Christian doctrine became materialized during those centuries in the emotional invocations and joyful exaltations of liturgical hymns and devotional prayers.

4. The Renaissance Iconographic Type of the Coronation of the Virgin

The Coronation of the Virgin—whose iconographic type some authors (Verdier 1980, pp. 17–18; Le Pichon 1982; Thérel 1984) have studied deeply—, although it lacks objective reality, it is an imaginary "event" full of doctrinal meaning. In fact, according to Christian belief, it is a symbolic episode that culminates the prodigious events of the Death or Dormition of the Virgin Mary[15] and her bodily Assumption to heaven.[16] In addition, the idea and the iconographic type of the Coronation of the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, and, therefore, as Queen of the angels, saints, virgins, patriarchs, prophets, and all the blessed from Paradise, is founded—according to the Church Fathers, theologians, and medieval hymnographers—on the argument that being Mother of God the Son, King of Heaven, Mary must necessarily have that same royal status, and therefore be crowned Queen of Heaven after her Assumption.[17]

As some authors point out (Sauerländer 1972; Verdier 1980, p. 9; Thérel 1984; Williamson 1997, p. 58), the iconographic theme of the Coronation of the Virgin began to be represented sculpturally as early as the middle of the 12th century on the tympanums of the portals from the churches of Quenington, in Gloucestershire, England (c. 1140) and in the cathedral of Senlis in France around 1170. From the 13th century onwards, this theme was widely disseminated in the portal tympanums of numerous cathedrals and churches in France and other regions of Europe (Sauerländer 1972; Verdier 1980; Thérel 1984; Williamson 1997, pp. 94–97, 353–451). On the other hand, the pictorial representation of the Marian Coronation will occur much later, with some rare examples in the 13th century, before it became more frequent from the 14th century onwards. Now, the iconography of the Coronation of the Virgin, although it spread throughout all European countries, became especially abundant and prolific in Italy, in the context of the profound devotion to Mary that arose in that country, many of whose main cities they adopted the Virgin Mary as their local patron saint.[18]

This article seeks to interpret fourteen Marian Coronations produced by Italian Renaissance painters, to discover the eventual doctrinal meanings underlying such pictorial images. In that order of ideas, we will support our iconographic interpretations on the doctrinal texts of Church Fathers, and medieval theologians and hymnographers referring to Mary as Queen of Heaven that we have analyzed in the two preceding sections.

It is quite clear that this iconographic type of Mary's Coronation also occurs in other European countries. But we have decided to limit our research to Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries for two reasons: first, because Italy during those two centuries is a fairly homogeneous socio-cultural context, so our study could reach some coherent results; second, because of the impossibility of dealing with other countries at the same time, without extending too much our brief article (which is not a book).

In addition, we have chosen these fourteen paintings of Mary's Coronation in Italian Renaissance, because they seemed to us to be exemplary representative of the iconographic subject under analysis, and also because they stand out as outstanding products by some of the most important Italian painters of the period. In this regard, we can distinguish, in the context of Renaissance Italian painting, three iconographic types of the Coronation of Mary, which, although different, are fully complementary since they constitute a progressive mutual enrichment. These three iconographic types are: (1) the Coronation with

angels (almost always, musician angels); (2) the Coronation with angels and saints; (3) the Coronation with angels, saints, and scenes of Mary. We will now present some paintings, each one illustrative of one or another of these three typologies.

4.1. The Coronation of the Virgin with Angels

We have selected three works to illustrate this iconographic typology.

The Master of the Washington Coronation structures his *Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1333–1362, from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC (formerly attributed to Paolo Veneziano) (Figure 1), with a relatively simple composition. The scene is reduced to a narrow, vertical strip on which the painter superimposes the figures of the two protagonists, Christ and Mary, seated on a wide throne. Behind them, forming a semi-mandorla, are lined up eight tiny angels who, opening a red canopy, serve as a guard of honor for the Kings of Heaven. The enthroned Christ presides over the scene, girded with his crown of King of Heaven, in the act of putting with his right hand the crown of heavenly Queen to his mother, who accepts this honor by extending her open hands forward, in a priestly gesture. It is interesting to highlight in this painting the enormous difference between the imposing figure of the Virgin with respect to the small and almost obliterated figures of the angels, of whom only part of their bodies can be seen. The author of this painting has undoubtedly wanted to make visible in this way the incomprehensible superiority of the Virgin as heavenly Queen over the angels and the other creatures of Heaven and earth, as it was highlighted by many Fathers, medieval theologians, and hymnographers. That is why it is surprising that, when commenting on this work, Michelangelo Muraro (1969, pp. 157–58) says nothing about its theological meanings.

Figure 1. The Master of the Washington Coronation, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1333–1362. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Instead, Niccolò di Buonaccorso (active 1355–1388), in *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1380, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (Figure 2), prefers to combine, expanding them, the two compositional schemes used by the two artists just mentioned. Buonaccorso takes from the Master of the Washington Coronation the formula of a multitude of angels surrounding the throne of the Kings of Heaven from behind as a mandorla, although here Buonaccorso considerably multiplies the number of angels, and adds cherubs and seraphim with bristling wings. Bonaccorso also takes over from Giotto the formula of placing four angels kneeling at the foot of the throne, although enhancing it conceptually. In fact, only two of those angels gaze with enchantment at the royal couple, since the other two

are musical angels who, with their musical instruments, complete the choir of several other musical angels that surround the throne. All the musical angels make their string and wind instruments resonate here to accompany the songs that the innumerable angels, seraphim, cherubim, and other angelic creatures that surround the heavenly Sovereigns sing with their mouths open. By depicting all the angelic hierarchies acting as instrumentalists and singers, the intellectual author of this painting wants to make visible the testimony of the countless medieval Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers who brought to light the immense joy and enthusiasm with which the angelic hierarchies accompany Mary in her Assumption, and at her Coronation as Heavenly Queen.

Figure 2. Niccolò di Buuonaccorso, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1380. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

4.2. The Coronation of the Virgin with Saints and Angels

This typology is, by far, the most abundant and complex of all those used in the Italian Renaissance to represent the Coronation of the Virgin. To illustrate this second category, we present here the following twelve paintings:

Giotto di Bondone (c. 1267–1337) establishes the most complete and richest prototype of Marian Queenship in *The Coronation of Mary with angels and saints*, c. 1326–1334[19] (Figure 3), better known as the *Baroncelli Polyptych* for presiding over the altar of the Baroncelli Chapel in the church of Santa Croce in Florence.[20] In fact, this work by Giotto will serve as an essential model for many other Italian Renaissance painters who will tackle this Marian theme. The imitation of the giottesco model by other artists can be seen especially in the arrangement with which Giotto places both protagonists seated on a common throne, with Christ crowning with both hands her mother, who stands with the hands crossed over her belly. As assistants to the solemn royal ceremony, Giotto places a multitude of saints standing and a choir of kneeling musician angels on the four side panels, while also placing four other angels on the central panel (two of them offering the Virgin vases of possible aromas), who, on their knees, gaze in ecstasy at the two Kings of Heaven. Giotto organizes the altarpiece according to a total symmetry, with all the characters on the side panels in a perfect correlation of similarity in position and volume, as is also the case with the six characters on the central panel. With this numerous cohort of characters, the intellectual author of this *Baroncelli Polyptych* wants to show that the Virgin Mary, when crowned as Queen of Heaven, becomes Queen of the angels, the saints, the prophets, the virgins, and all the inhabitants of celestial Paradise, as expressed by the Fathers, the theologians, and hymnographers.

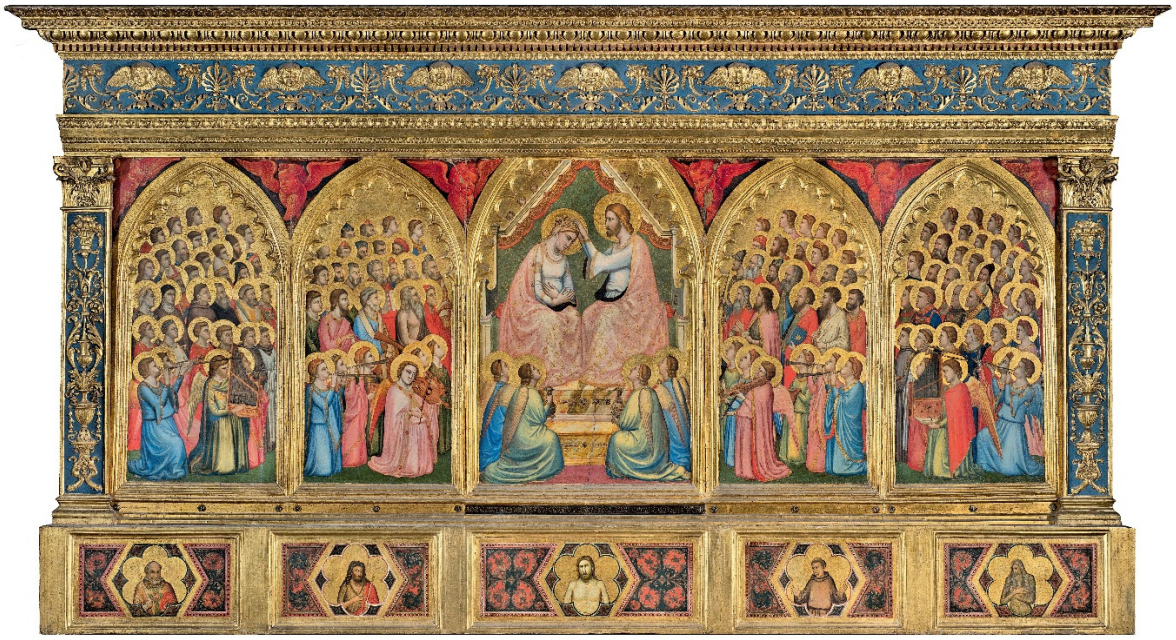


Figure 3. Giotto di Bondone, *The Coronation of the Virgin with angels and saints* (*Baroncelli Polyptych*), c. 1325–1334. Baroncelli Chapel, church of Santa Croce, Florence.

All the commentators we know of this *Baroncelli Polyptych* completely avoided justifying in primary sources the doctrinal meanings of this *Coronation*. You can see such silence, for example, in Roberto Salvini (1962, pp. 86–87, tav. 247), Giovanni Previtali (1967, p. 288, tav. CXIV, and p. 329, Figure 367), Francesca Flores D'Arcais (1995, pp. 337–43, s.n. figs 338–339 and 344), Miklos Boskovits (2000, pp. 187–91, Figure 2, p. 188, and fig, 5, p. 190) and Alessandro Tomei (2009a, 2009b).

The Coronation of the Virgin. Polyptych of Valle Ramita, c. 1400, painted by Gentile da Fabriano (c. 1370–1427) as an altarpiece for a convent (Figure 4), reveals the influence of the Franciscan spirituality on the iconographic subject being studied. In this order of ideas, the artist places on the side panels of the altarpiece, as privileged witnesses of the Coronation of Mary, several saints directly or indirectly linked to the Franciscan Order: on the panels to the left of the main register he places St. Jerome, and St. Francis of Assisi, while on the right of this register, he places St. Dominic de Guzmán and St. Mary Magdalene. In addition, on the panels of the upper register, he describes these four scenes of saints: St. John the Baptist praying in the desert, the martyrdom of St. Peter Martyr, St. Francis of Assisi meditating, and St. Francis receiving the stigmata. In the central panel, Gentile da Fabriano depicts the scene of the Coronation of the Virgin by Christ, both in a seated position on an invisible throne. In turn, God the Father, figured at the top of the panel with a large crown at his temples and surrounded by eleven red seraphim forming a semicircular mandorla, embraces both royal protagonists. As if that were not enough, the dove of the Holy Spirit appears flying between the bodies of Jesus and Mary, to remind us that God the Father promised the Virgin at the Annunciation that, so that she could be the mother of God the Son while preserving her virginity, "the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you." (Luc, 1.35). Thus, Gentile represents in this Coronation the entire Trinity, each divine Person with a specific role in the royal ceremony. In the lower part of the central panel, eight musical angels celebrate with their instruments the glory of their heavenly Sovereign on the great event of her consecration as Queen of Heaven.

Figure 4. Gentile da Fabriano, *The Coronation of the Virgin. Polyptych of Valle Ramita*, c. 1400. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

As far as we know, most commentators on this work by Gentile da Fabriano avoid documenting in primary sources the doctrinal meanings of that *Coronation of the Virgin*. You can remark such omission in Emma Micheletti (1976, pp. 5–11, Tav. III-XII, s.p.), Bruno Molajoli (2006), Keith Christiansen (2006, p. 20, Figure 3, p. 21), and Andrea De Marchi (2006, pp. 123–27). On the contrary, you can appreciate a commendable exception in this regard in Matteo Ceriana and Emanuela Daffra (Ceriana and Daffra 2006, pp. 132–33), OK who partially justify the meaning of this *Coronation* by Gentile da Fabriano, citing some textual references to several expressions alluding to Mary's Queenship in the *Song of Songs*, in the liturgy of the Vigil of the Assumption, and in the *Officium Beatae Virginis Mariae* of the *Breviarium Sancti Francisci*.

Lorenzo Monaco, whose real name was Piero di Giovanni (c. 1370-c. 1425) and who was a Camaldolese monk as well as a painter, depicts his *Triptych of the Coronation of the Virgin*, from the National Gallery of London (Figure 5), according to the spirituality of his monastic order. For this reason, he introduces, as privileged witnesses of the Marian ephemerides, sixteen great saints, in a direct or indirect relationship with the Camaldolese order. Thus, in the first row of the left panel, St. Benedict opens the book of the Benedictine

rule, together with St. John the Baptist and St. Mathew, opening his Gospel; in the first row of the right panel, St. John the Evangelist opens his Gospel, next to St. Peter carrying the keys of heaven, and, at the bottom, St. Romuald, the founder of the Camaldolese order. As many Italian Renaissance painters tend to do, Lorenzo Monaco also places in the central panel a cohort of kneeling angels surrounding the double throne on which Mary sits near Christ, who crowns her mother with both hands. The painter thus makes visible the celestial Queenship of the Virgin as the Lady of the angels, the saints, and those who inhabit the heavenly Paradise.

Figure 5. Lorenzo Monaco, Triptych of The Coronation of the Virgin with angels and saints, 1407–09. National Gallery, London.

In their respective comments on this work by Lorenzo Monaco, Angelo Tartuferi (Tartuferi and Parenti 2006, pp. 167–70, Figure cat. 23-c), Anneke De Vries and Victor M. Schmidt (De Vries and Schmidt 2006, pp. 39–42), and Giorgio Bonsanti (2009, p. 26, Fig, 3, p. 27) leave the doctrinal meanings of this Coronation of the Virgin unexplained and documented.

The Dominican monk and painter Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455) brings in *The Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1432, from the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Figure 6), a first interpretation of the subject under study according to the second category of Coronation with angels and saints. The painter represents the heavenly Paradise as a set of small clouds that serve as a pavement for the common throne on which the Virgin and Christ are seated. He crowns with his right hand his mother as Queen of Heaven, both surrounded on the right and left by two choirs of musical angels that with their instruments proclaim the glory of the Majesty of Mary. The Angelico also places two large groups of male and female saints surrounding both celestial monarchs, jointly extolling the glorious Lady of Heaven.

Figure 6. Fra Angelico, The Coronation of the Virgin, c. 1432. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

The commentators we know of this Coronation of the Virgin by Fra Angelico at the Galleria degl Uffizi, including Mario Salmi (1958, p. 100, tav. 16a, 17 and 18, s.p.), tend to forget to document its doctrinal symbolism. To our knowledge, Serena Nocentini (2009, pp. 178–79, Figure s.n., p. 179) is the only one that justifies the doctrinal bases of this iconographic theme in primary sources, providing the revelations of Saint Brigida of Sweden as sources of inspiration for this iconographic type.

Fra Angelico captures *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1434–1435, originally painted for the convent church of St. Dominic in Fiesole and today in the Musée du Louvre (Figure 7), with an extraordinarily complex compositional and conceptual structure that enriches much this iconographic theme, even surpassing Giotto's prototype in the Baroncelli Polyptych. Firstly, the Angelico imagines Heaven as a lavish palace, only suggested by its splendid throne, covered with a Gothic canopy, on which Christ sits as King of Heaven, as indicated by the golden crown that encircles his temples. The luxurious marbles that cover the stairway/platform on which the throne stands, as well as the rich polychrome marble tiling, also reveal the luxury of the palace of the Kings of Heaven. In addition, Fra Angelico goes beyond Giotto's compositional-narrative model by multiplying the poses, attitudes, and clothing of the musician angels and, especially, those of the numerous saints. Among them, one can see St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padova and St. Dominic de Guzmán, St. Mary Magdalene (with a vial of ointment), St. Catherine of Alexandria (with a spiked breaking wheel), St. Agnes (with a lamb in her arms), St. Nicholas of Bari (with an episcopal tiara and a sumptuous cope). Ultimately, the most marked difference between Angelico and Giotto derives from the poses and attitudes with which he represents, respectively, Christ and the Virgin: instead of putting both sitting on the common throne, as it was usual since Giotto, the Angelico places Mary kneeling, on the last step, with folded hands before her

Son, who, sitting on his royal throne high above the Virgin, places her the crown with both hands. By emphasizing such a difference in situation and attitude by both protagonists, the cultured Dominican painter Fra Angelico wants to visualize the idea that the original King of Heaven since eternity is Christ, God the Son, who decided in time to extol Mary as Queen of Heaven, as a reward for her decision to accept being his virginal Mother on earth. In his comments to Fra Angelico's *Coronation* in the Louvre, Mario Salmi (1958, p. 35, tav 57b., S.p.) says nothing about its theological implications.

Figure 7. Fra Angelico, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1434–1435. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

The Carmelite monk Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–1469) offers a grandiose design of the theme analyzed in his *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1441–1447, originally painted for the female convent of Sant'Ambrogio in Florence and today in the Galleria degli Uffizi (Figure 8). The painter sets the scene in a grandiose heavenly palace, on whose marble throne God the Father encircles the crown of Queen of Heaven to the Virgin, kneeling before him with folded hands. It is symptomatic that the cultured painter Lippi has preferred to put God the Father, instead of God the Son, as the one who bestows the crown on Mary, thus seeking to shed light on the idea that the Most High was the one who decided to choose Mary as Mother of the Redeemer, and therefore who raised her as Queen of Heaven. Apart from the imposing presence of the two protagonists, framed by the monumental throne at the top of the central panel, one of the most impressive aspects of this altarpiece is the numerous multitudes of angels and saints, many of them standing, others kneeling, who, in very diverse attitudes, gestures and attire, attend the royal ceremony as a cohort of honor. With this feature, Fra Filippo Lippi clearly underlines the category of Mary as Queen of

the angels, the saints, and all the inhabitants of Heaven, as proclaimed by the Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers that we analyzed in the two previous sections.

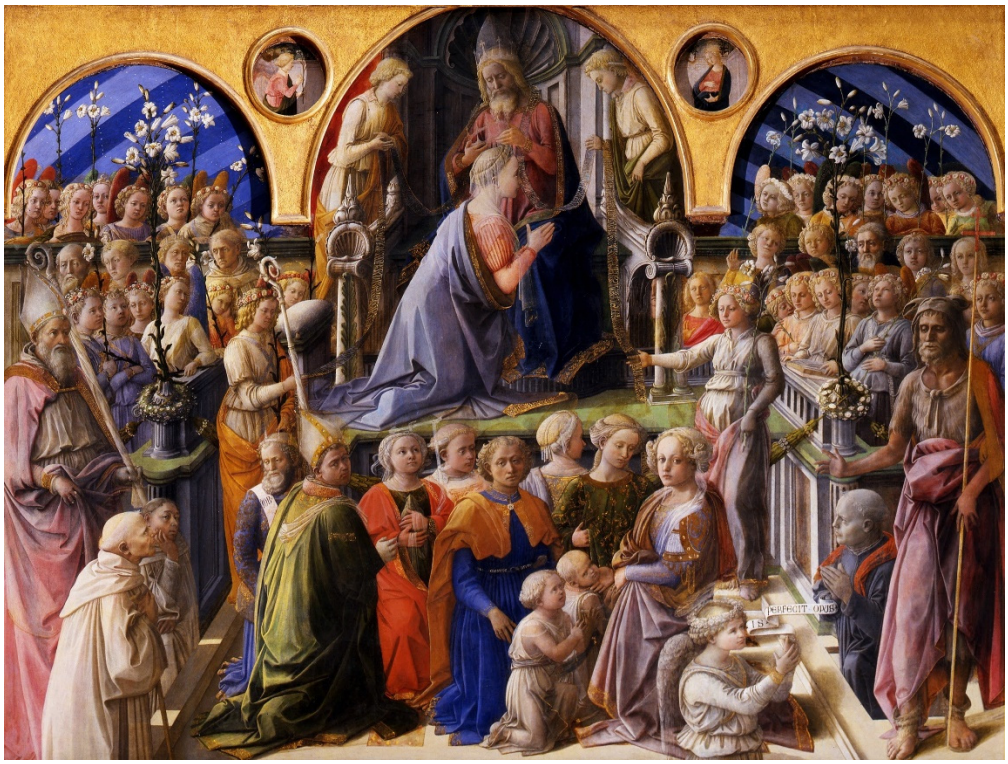


Figure 8. Filippo Lippi, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1441–1447. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510) interprets in an inventive format the theme in his *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1490–1492, originally painted as an altarpiece for the church of the Dominican monastery of San Marco in Florence, and today in the Galleria degli Uffizi (Figure 9). The scene of the Marian coronation happens in Heaven, represented as a splendid golden environment at the top of the lunette, while in the lower parallelogram, which represents the earth, modulated by a magnificent landscape, four saints attend the ceremony of Marian exaltation. As Fra Filippo Lippi did in the just analyzed painting in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Botticelli also puts God the Father, girded with the triple papal crown, placing the crown of the heavenly Queen on the head of Mary, seated in a submissive attitude before the Most High, with her hands crossed on her chest. While a group of seraphim and cherubim cover both protagonists shaping a semicircular mandola, other angels dance joyfully in a circle around the celestial Sovereigns, while other angels offer them flowers. Standing on the plane of the earth St. John the Evangelist, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Eligius attend the great Marian triumph. When referring to this work by Botticelli, Piero Bargellini (1990, pp. 102–4, fig, s.n. s.p.) completely silences its possible doctrinal meanings.

Figure 9. Sandro Botticelli, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1490–1492. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Pietro Perugino (c. 1448–1623) designs *The Coronation of the Virgin*, on the back of the *Pala di Monteripido*, 1504, from the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia (Figure 10), with the conventional compositional structure at the time. In the upper part of the painting, which represents Heaven, Christ imposes with both hands the crown on the head of his mother as the heavenly Queen, both seated on a throne of clouds. In the lower parallelogram, which figures the Earth, two symmetrical groups of male and female saints, among whom St. Peter can be seen with an enormous key in his right hand, contemplate in ecstasy the glorification of the mother of God. Four angels dance in the sky around the heavenly kings, spreading a garland of flowers. In their respective comments on this work by Perugino, Ettore Camesasca (1959, pp. 106–7, tav. 91B; 1969, p. 99, tav. 167) and Pietro Scarpellini (1984, p. 107, Cat. 128, Figure 213, p. 251, tav. 35c, p. 310) avoid documenting its doctrinal implications.

Figure 10. Pietro Perugino, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, reverse of the *Pala di Monteripido*, 1504. Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia.

4.3. The Coronation of the Virgin with the Scenes of the Life of Mary

To illustrate this third iconographic typology of the Coronation of the Virgin, we have selected the following four paintings:

Commissioned by Pope Nicholas IV, Jacopo Torriti (active between 1270–1300) executed in mosaic the monumental *Coronation of the Virgin* in the apse of Santa Maria Maggiore's basilica in Rome (Figure 11). Signed and dated in 1296 by Torriti, this enormous mosaic mural program has as its central iconographic motif in the oven vault the ceremony of the royal exaltation of Mary, attended by two groups of angels and six saints. In the lower strip of the vault, five Marian scenes complete the main episode like a predella: *The Annunciation*, *The Nativity of Jesus*, *The Dormition of Mary*, *The Adoration of the Magi*, and *The Presentation of Jesus to the temple*. Torriti deliberately places *The Dormition* in the center of the lower strip, just under *The Coronation*, to highlight the crowning of Mary immediately after her Dormition/Resurrection/Assumption. In the center of the vault, Jesus and Mary are sitting on a double throne of gold and gems. Displaying in his left hand an open book with the inscription *Veni Electa mea et ponam in te Thronum meum*, Christ places with his right hand the crown on the head of Mary, who opens her arms upwards in a priestly pose. At the edge of the throne, two cohorts of angels pay homage to the enthroned couple, while at both ends of the vault six saints celebrate the triumph of their Sovereign: on the left, St. Francis, St. Paul, and St. Peter, with the kneeling Pope Nicholas IV in front of them; on the right, St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist, and St. Anthony of Padova. The base displays two inscriptions in capital letters. The first proclaims: MARIA VIRGO ASSVMPTA EST AD ETHEREVM THALAMVM IN QVO REX REGVM STELLATO SEDET SOLIO. The second states: EXALTATA EST SANCTA DEI GENITRIX SVPER CHOROS ANGELORVM AD CELESTIA REGNA. These inscriptions corroborate once more that the iconography of the Coronation of Mary is based on the pronouncements that the Fathers, theologians and hymnographers made about the celestial Queenship of Mary, some of which we analyzed in the two preceding sections.

Figure 11. Jacopo Torriti, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1296. Apse of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome.

By extensively studying this Coronation of the Virgin and its complementary Marian scenes, Alessandro Tomei (1990, pp. 99–125, table XVIII-XXX, pp. 194–201), explains in great depth and with abundant documentary evidence including the theological meanings and even the pedagogical-propaganda intentions of this monumental iconographic program in

the apse of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. In this case, Alessandro Tomei stands out as a true example of a rigorous researcher.

Filippo Lippi's fresco painting of *The Coronation of the Virgin with scenes of The Annunciation, The Dormition of Mary, and The Nativity*, 1467–1469, in the apse of Spoleto Cathedral (Figure 12), offers a monumental new example of this third iconography of the Marian event we are analyzing. In the center of the semi-dome, the painter represents the huge figures of God the Father, crowned as King of Heaven, over a vast sky, blessing Mary with his right hand and placing on her the crown of Heavenly Queen with his left hand, while she remains kneeling with devout prayerful attitude before Him. Both are in the center of a polychrome circular border full of undulating rays. On both sides of the royal protagonists, a multitude of standing angels and kneeling saints attend the glorification of the Virgin.

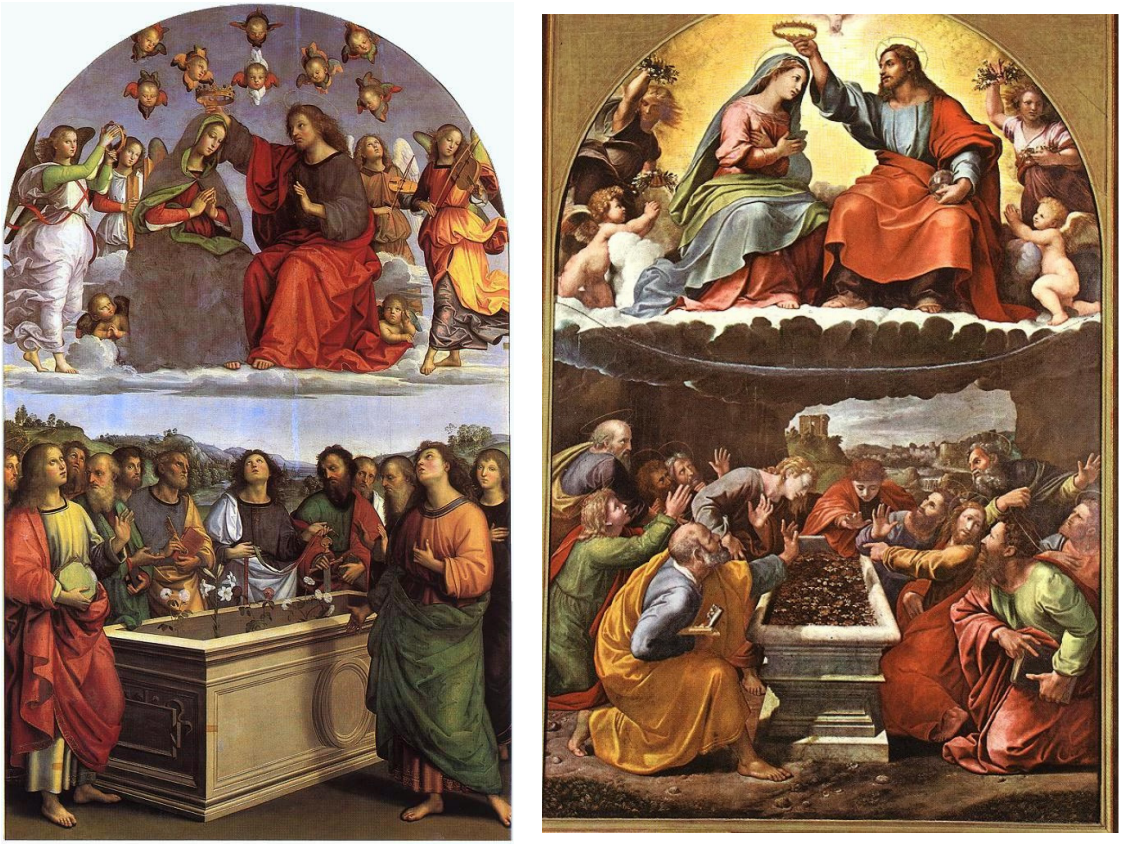
Figure 12. Filippo Lippi, The Coronation of the Virgin, with scenes of The Annunciation, The Dormition of Mary and The Nativity,1467–1469, apse of Spoleto Cathedral.

At the base of the apse, Fra Filippo Lippi depicts three major episodes from the life of the Virgin: on the left, *The Annunciation*; in the center, *The Dormition*; on the right, *The Nativity of Jesus*. As Jacopo Torriti did in the set of mosaics in the apse of Santa Maria Maggiore, Lippi here places *The Dormition of the Virgin* in the center of the base, in perfect visual and conceptual continuity with the scene of her *Coronation*, to highlight

that the exaltation of Mary as Queen of Heaven occurs immediately after her Dormition/Resurrection/Assumption in body and soul to the heavenly Paradise.

When commenting extensively on this work by Fra Filippo Lippi in Spoletto Cathedral, Luigi Fausti (1970, pp. 3–26) does not provide any doctrinal justifications to interpret its possible doctrinal meanings.

Raffaello Sanzio and Giulio Romano also offer interpretations of the Coronation of Mary in direct juxtaposition/continuity with the Dormition scene. Raffaello (1483–1520) structures The Coronation of the Virgin. Pala Oddi, 1502–1504, from the Pinacoteca Vaticana (Figure 13a), in a parallelogram divided into two equivalent sections: in the lunette in the upper section, set in Heaven, he represents the glorification of the Virgin, with Jesus Christ placing the crown with the right hand, both being seated on a throne of clouds. Around them, some musical angels sing their instruments, while little seraphim and cherubim fly above the royal couple. In the lower section of the painting, set on earth, the twelve apostles surround Mary's empty sarcophagus filled with red and white flowers, while looking up to signify that they are witnessing the suggested Assumption of Mary into heaven. This last episode is also evidenced by the girdle of the Virgin that the incredulous apostle Thomas exhibits in his hands, in reference to the apocryphal writing according to which Thomas picked up that girdle that Mary threw at him while she was being assumed into heaven so that he could show it to the apostles as proof of her Assumption. Commenting on Raffaello's work, Ettore Camesasca (1956, p. 35, tav. 16–19) and Pierluigi De Vecchi (1966, p. 124, cat. 156) say nothing about its possible theological meanings.



(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 13. (**a**) Raffaello, *The Coronation of the Virgin. Pala Oddi*, 1502–1504. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Musei Viticani; (**b**) Giulio Romano, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1525. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Musei Vaticani.

Giulio Romano (1499–1546) in The Coronation of the Virgin, 1525, from the Pinacoteca Vaticana (Figure 13b), poses a composition relatively similar to that of Raffaello just analyzed. Giulio Romano also divides the painting into two almost equivalent sections: in the

upper lunette, Christ crowns his mother with his right hand, the two seated on a common throne, although here the angelic cohort consists of only four angels, two of whom offer garlands of flowers to their heavenly Queen. In the lower section, somewhat larger than the one above, the twelve apostles appear in Mary's cave/tomb, surrounding her empty sepulcher covered in flowers.

Thus, in accordance with what we have already explained, both Raffaello and Giulio Romano underline the doctrinal continuity between the Dormition/Resurrection/Assumption of Mary and her immediate Coronation as Queen of Heaven.

5. Conclusions

As a result of this double analysis of texts and images, we can synthetically infer some conclusions:

From the 4th century, a growing number of Church Fathers and theologians began to consider the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, basing this on Mary's exclusive privilege of being the Mother of God: In fact, the divine motherhood of the Virgin had been established as a dogma by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431). The argument was that if Mary is the mother of God the Son, King of kings, and Lord of Heaven, she also rightfully deserves to be the Queen of Heaven.

Based on the impressive and unanimous doctrinal tradition of Fathers and theologians, many medieval hymnographers wrote countless liturgical hymns in which they poetically designated Mary as Queen of Heaven and, therefore, as Queen of the angels, the saints and the other blessed of the Heavenly Paradise.

Inspired by the thesis of the Queenship of Mary, unanimously defended for so many centuries by numerous Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers, the iconographic type of the Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven began in the middle of the 12th century to appear sculpturally in some portals in England and France. Then it was expressed in numerous paintings from the following century, especially in Italy.

The analysis of fourteen pictorial images of the Coronation of Mary produced by Italian Renaissance artists shows that their authors placed special emphasis on presenting Mary receiving the legitimizing crown of Queen of Heaven from the hands of her divine Son Jesus (or, sometimes, of God the Father himself) amid a multitude of angels and saints, who attend the ceremony as privileged witnesses and as a cohort of honor.

Undoubtedly considering the teachings of the Church Fathers, theologians, and hymnographers in this regard, the authors of these Italian Renaissance paintings very effectively illustrated the idea of Mary as Queen of Heaven, and, therefore, as the legitimate Queen of the angels, the saints, and all the heavenly blessed.

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Notes

1 "Salvesis, sola inter reginas regina, quae regum quidem filia es, universorum autem Regis Mater, ac religiosorum regum et imperatorum robur. Salvesis, sola inter reginas regina, vestitu deaurato circumdata, ac varietate, veluti psalmorum cantor David exclamavit." (Joannes Damascenus, *Homilia in Annuntiationem B.V. Mariae*. PG 96, 654–655).

2 "et cum magna et inexplicabili libertate astans, angelis, et mundo sublimioribus Virtutibus universis, omni sermone major laetitia es, patriarchis sempiterna oblectatio, justis gaudium ineffabile, perennis prophetis exsultatio." (Joannes Damascenus, *Homilia I in Dormitionem B.V. Mariae*. PG 96, 718).

3 "Exaltata super choros angelorum gaudens et gloriosa in perpetuum regina coelorum, ubi adjuvas omnes qui te dominam glorificant, et sanctum nomen tuum humili prece frequentant". (Anselmus Cantuariensis, *Oratio 40. Ad sanctam Virginem Mariam. In Assumptione ejus*. PL 158, 963).

4 "Nulla de caetero macula peccati anima mea inquinetur; sed mundo corde et casto corpora per merita tuae saluberrimae nativitatis, annuntiationis, et sanctissimi virginei partus tui, et castissimae purificationis, et gloriossisimae asssumptionis in excelso cœlorum palatio possim praesentari, in quo gloriosa exsultas et regnas regina angelorum et hominum, Mater Domini nostri Jesu Christi." (Anselmus Cantuariensis, *Oratio 40. Ad sanctam Virginem Mariam. In Assumptione ejus*. PL 158, 966).

5 "In primis audio te supppliciter orare, quae vicinior existis salutis nostrae, quae vitam nostram peperisti, mundo perdito remedium attulisti, benedicta super mulieres Virgo mater ipsius misericordiae, sancta María, Domina mundi, regina coeli, tuae sanctissimae pietati meam orationem qualemcumque committo, ut eam offeras dilectissimo Filio tuo Domino nostro." (Anselmus Cantuariensis, *Oratio 39. Ad Christum et omnes sanctos*. PL 158, 932).

6 "Tu decus mundi. Tu nobilitas populi christiani, O regina et domina mundi, scala coeli, thronus Dei, janua paradisi, audi preces pauperum, ne despicias gemitus miserorum." (Anselmus Cantuariensis, *Oratio 45. Ad eamdem sanctam Virginem Mariam*. PL 158, 962).

7 "Decus virginum, domina gentium, regina angelorum, fons hortorum, ablutio peccatorum, sancta et perpetua Virgo Maria, succurre misero, subveni perdito". (Anselmus Cantuariensis, *Oratio 49. Ad eamdem Dei Matrem*. PL 158, 947).

8 "Praecessit nos regina nostra, praecessit, et tam gloriosa suscepta est, ut fiducialiter sequantur Dominam servuli clamantes. *Trahe nos post te; in odorem unguentorum tuorum curremos (Cant*, 1, 3). Advocatam praemissit peregrinatio nostra, quae tanquam Judicis mater, et mater misericordiae, suppliciter et efficaciter salutis nostrae negotia pertractabit."(Bernardus Claraevallensis, *In Assumptione B.V. Mariae. Sermo I*, 1. PL 183, 415).

9 "Sed et illud quis vel cogitare sufficiat, quam gloriosa hodie mundi regina processerit, et quanto devotionis affecta tota in ejus occursum coelestium legionum prodierit multitudo: quibus ad thronum gloriae canticis sit deducta; quam placido vultu, quam serena facie, quam laetis [*alias*: divinis] amplexibus suscepta a Filio, et super omnem exaltata creaturam, cum eo honore, quo tanta mater digna fuit, cum ea gloria, quae tantum decuit Filium?" (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *In Assumptione B.V. Mariae. Sermo I*, 4. PL 183, 415).

10 "Eo beatam te dicent omnes generationes (Luc. I, 48), Genitrix Dei, domina mundi, regina coeli, Omnes, inquam, generationes. Sunt enim generationes coeli et terrae. [. . .] Ex hoc ergo beatam te dicent omnes generationes, quae omnibus generationibus vitam et gloriam genuisti. In te enim angeli laetitiam, justi gratiam, peccatores veniam inveniunt in aeternum." (Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermo II. De operibus Trinitatis super nos, et de triplici gratia Spiritus sancti*. PL 183, 328).

11 "Propter nuptiale connubium Virgo Maria est *Mater Dei*; propter regale solium, *regina caeli*; propter sacerdotale ornamentum, *advocata* generis humani. Et ad haec omnia idonea erat Virgo Maria, cum esset de genere hominum, de genere regum et de genere sacerdotum. Dicat ergo amantissima Virgo Maria: *Qui creavit me requievit in tabernaculo meo*." (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *De Annunciatione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo IV*, 1: Q IX, 672a).

12 "Et ideo beata Virgo omnium regina facta est.—Omnes ergo eam laudent, in eius honorem *omne genu flectatur, caelestium, terrestrium. et infernorum*; quia beneficia eius in omnes redundant." (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *De Annunciatione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo IV*, 1: Q IX, 673a).

13 "Super omnes Sanctos nihilominus facta est nobilis quantum ad *dignitatis* sive generis *excellentiam*; ipsa enim genere et dignitate, cum sit Mater Imperatoris altissimi, est omnium creaturarum nobilissima; et idcirco super omnem creaturam et ad dexteram Filii sui fuit non immerito exaltata et in solio sublimissimo collocata". (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III*, 2: Q IX, 692a).

14 "Festina namque, quia coronaberis corona gloriosa, per quam efficieris conformis *maiestati Patris* aeterni, secundum illud Isaiae sexagesimo secundo: *Eris corona gloriae in manu Domini et diadema regni in manu Dei tui.* Ipsa namque, in gloria prae ceteris excelsior, quasi *in manu Dei* ostenditur ad exemplum unionis et accensionis desiderii. Unde ipsa tanquam regina caeli sedet ad dexteram Regis aeterni, secundum illud Psalmi': *Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato*, et coronata est corona consimili coronae Regis aeterni". (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, *De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo VI*, 2: Q IX, 699b-700a).

15 We have analyzed the subject of the Dormition of the Virgin in Salvador-González (2011a).

16 We have analyzed the subject of the several studies, among them, Salvador-González (2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2019) and Salvador-González and Perpiñá García (2014).

17 On the Assumption of Mary, see (Bover 1947).

18 See, for example, the book of Diana Norman (1999), that studies the influence of the devotion to the Virgin Mary on the political and social life of Sienna during the final centuries of the Middle Ages.

19 The dating of this *Baroncelli Polyptych* is very discussed. Corrado Gizzi (2001, p. 206) dates it between 1326 and 1328. Klaus Krüger (2002, p. 58) dates its finalisation in 1330. Mueller von der Haegen (2000, p. 125) dates it in 1334.

20 This outstanding altarpiece by Giotto has been accurately studied by Massimiliano G. Rosito (2001, pp. 109–15).

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