Blessed John Duns Scotus: Defender of the Immaculate Conception

Bl. John Duns Scotus (b. 1266; d. 1308 A.D.), Franciscan Priest and theologian, was the first coherently to explain the Apostolic Faith in the Immaculate Conception as something entirely coherent with Christ's universal primacy and mediation. Since his time the Sacred Magisterium of the Church has solemnly defined this doctrine and declared it to belong to the deposit of the Faith, which Christ entrusted to His Apostles.
ON THE FITTINGNESS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
by Bl. John Duns Scotus (b. 1266; d. 1308 A.D.)

Was the Blessed Virgin conceived in sin? The answer is no, for as Augustine writes: "When sin is treated, there can be no inclusion of Mary in the discussion." And Anselm says: "It was fitting that the Virgin should be resplendent with a purity greater than which none under God can be conceived." Purity here is to be taken in the sense of pure innocence under God, such as was in Christ.

The contrary, however, is commonly asserted on two grounds. First, the dignity of Her Son, who, as universal Redeemer, opened the gates of heaven. But if blessed Mary had not contracted original sin, She would not have needed the Redeemer, nor would He have opened the door for Her because it was never closed. For it is only closed because of sin, above all original sin.

In respect to this first ground, one can argue from the dignity of Her Son qua Redeemer, Reconciler, and Mediator, that She did not contract original sin.
For a most perfect mediator exercises the most perfect mediation possible in regard to some person for whom he mediates. Thus Christ exercised a most perfect act of mediation in regard to some person for whom He was Mediator. In regard to no person did He have a more exalted relationship than to Mary. Such, however, would not have been true had He not preserved Her from original sin.

The proof is threefold: in terms of God to whom He reconciles; in terms of the evil from which He frees; and in terms of the indebtedness of the person whom He reconciles.

First, no one absolutely and perfectly placates anyone about to be offended in any way unless he can avert the offense. For to placate only in view of remitting the offense once committed is not to placate most perfectly. But God does not undergo offense because of some experience in Himself, but only because of sin in the soul of a creature. Hence, Christ does not placate the Trinity most perfectly for the sin to be contracted by the sons of Adam if He does not prevent the Trinity from being offended in someone, and if the soul of some child of Adam does not contract such a sin; and thus it is possible that a child of Adam not have such a sin.

Secondly, a most perfect mediator merits the removal of all punishment from the one whom he reconciles. Original sin, however,
is a greater privation than the lack of the vision of God. Hence, if Christ most perfectly reconciles us to God, He merited that this most heavy of punishments be removed from some one person. This would have been His Mother.

Further, Christ is primarily our Redeemer and Reconciler from original sin rather than actual sin, for the need of the Incarnation and suffering of Christ is commonly ascribed to original sin. But He is also commonly assumed to be the perfect Mediator of at least one person, namely, Mary, whom He preserved from actual sin. Logically one should assume that He preserved Her from original sin as well.

Thirdly, a person reconciled is not absolutely indebted to his mediator, unless he receives from that mediator the greatest possible good. But this innocence, namely, preservation from the contracted sin or from the sin to be contracted, is available from the Mediator. Thus, no one would be absolutely indebted to Christ as Mediator unless preserved from original sin. It is a greater good to be preserved from evil than to fall into it and afterwards be freed from it. If Christ merited grace and glory for so many souls, who, for these gifts, are indebted to Christ as Mediator, why should no soul be His debtor for the gift of its innocence? And why, since the blessed Angels are innocent, should there be no human soul in heaven (except the human soul of Christ) who is innocent, that is, never in the state of original sin?
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Blessed Duns Scotus: Defender of the Immaculate Conception (DVD)

Movie Review

5.0 out of 5 stars "Potuit, decuit, ergo fecit!"

By semperfidelis "udayajmj" (Canada) –
This review is for: Blessed Duns Scotus: Defender of the Immaculate Conception (DVD)

The words of St. Anselm of Canterbury's principle is the heading for this review. It means "God could do it, it was appropriate, therefore he did it". A defense taken by Blessed Duns Scotus. And this line is from the movie itself.

This film has got to be one of the most intense movies made about the lives of the saints.....not so much about his life but his teachings and convictions.

Blessed Duns Scotus was one of the most prolific theologians of the middle ages and for his works he was given the title 'Doctor Subtilis'(literally means the Subtle Doctor) for his deep thoughts and the eloquent manner in which he presented them. He is most renowned for making a very public defense on the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, taking on even the thoughts and teachings of that great Doctor of the Church, Saint Thomas Aquinas.
The Immaculate Conception was actually a hotly debated topic and it had its supporters and detractors. Even the greatest devotee of the Virgin Mary, St. Bernard of Clairvaux belonged to the latter group. Hence we get a picture of a man with lots of guts who was willing to debate the teachings of the great philosophers and theologians of all time.

His motivation? A love for truth and study united with the Crucified Christ and a great love for the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary and charity for neighbor. To paraphrase a part of the dialogue from the film, Blessed Scotus admonishes his protege, William, that study, without being united to the Crucified Christ is not worth anything, and could lead to ruin... but united with Him is true Wisdom and Peace. FANTASTIC!!!!!!

Eventually his teaching would form the basis of the declaration of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception that was proclaimed in 1854.

All this is magnificently portrayed in this film. Along with the most beautiful backdrops of ancient monasteries and rolling fields, and mixed in with deep provoking thoughts on Christian teaching. Truly, the viewer feels like a student transported to that time, witnessing the lectures and the intellectual debates that abound in this film and would deeply benefit from the sagacity of the dialogue. But be forewarned.....the main aspect of this film lies in the teachings (dialogue), hence one must watch this film with rapt attention. Even missing one line would seem like losing a treasure trove. It is very profound, so there might be some who just might find this film dull.

The running time for this movie is 90 minutes in Italian with English
and Spanish subtitles. The only special feature is a trailer for the movie.

As with all movies from Ignatius press this DVD comes with a booklet, albeit a rather thin one of 8 pages but with great stills from the film. Its contents are as follows:

1) About the film.
2) Comments from the Director
3) The life and thoughts of Blessed Duns Scotus
4) Theology of Scotus
5) The Immaculate Conception
6) Praise of Scotus by Pope Benedict XVI
7) Scene Selections

A big part of this film was shot in a monastery so it seems a bit dark. However it creates the necessary ambiance to appreciate the times and the place.

It is noteworthy that this film won 2 awards at the Mirabile Dictu International Catholic Film Festival, for Best Film and Best Actor. (OK, OK...so it's not the Oscars.....!).

This movie was also the official film for World Youth Day 2011, that was held in Madrid, Spain.

To conclude, if you are devoted to the Blessed Mother or if you are just a religious movie junkie like me,.....this movie is definitely worth a buy!