



2013

A Homily on "The Blessedness of Jesus' Mother" in the *Catechesis Celtica* (Vat. Reg. lat. 49): Translation and Notes

Kristen Carella

Assumption College, k.carella@assumption.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.assumption.edu/english-faculty>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [European Languages and Societies Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Carella, Kristen. "A Homily on "The Blessedness of Jesus' Mother" in the *Catechesis Celtica* (Vat. Reg. lat. 49): Translation and Notes." *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 33, edited by Liam Anton Brannelly, Georgia Henley, and Kathryn O'Neill, Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 83-106.

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the English Department at Digital Commons @ Assumption University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Department Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Assumption University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@assumption.edu.

**A Homily on “The Blessedness of Jesus’ Mother”
in the *Catechesis Celtica* (Vat. Reg. lat. 49):
Translation and Notes**

Bryan Carella

I. Background on the *Catechesis Celtica*

Vatican Reg. lat. 49, now commonly referred to as the *Catechesis Celtica* (an anglicized version of the French designation *Catéchèses Celtiques* given to it by its first editor, Dom André Wilmart¹) is a *collectanea* of Latin religious materials, including homilies, gospel readings, short exegetical tracts, and comments on scripture, compiled most likely in Brittany sometime during the late tenth century.² Depending on how its contents are divided, it contains somewhere between forty-six and fifty-seven distinct items,³ most of

¹ André Wilmart, O.S.B, *Analecta Reginensia: Extraits des Manuscrits Latins de la Reine Christine Conservés au Vatican*, Studi e Testi, vol. 59 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933).

² Although the date and place of origin of the *Catechesis Celtica* has been the topic of some lively debate, Jean Rittmueller’s conclusion that the manuscript “was compiled in the late tenth century in a Breton monastery” is now generally accepted; see Rittmueller, *Liber Qvestionvm in Evangeliis*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina Scriptorum Celtigenae, vol. 108F (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 79*. For the best, most up-to-date background on the *Catechesis Celtica*, see her discussion of the text at 67*-79* and especially her bibliography at 68*-70*.

³ Martin McNamara, “Sources and Affiliations of the *Catechesis Celtica* (Ms. Vat. Reg. lat. 49),” *Sacris Erudiri* 34 (1994): 185-237 at 201 notes that “[s]tudents of the collection are not in agreement with regard to the numbers of distinct items in the collection . . . R.E. McNally, in his unpublished transcript, identifies 57; A. Wilmart [*Analecta Reginensia*] 46 and Jean Rittmueller [*Sacris Erudiri* 33 (1992-93), 259-305] 54. In what follows, I also identify 54, but differ slightly from J. Rittmueller.” Elsewhere in the same article, however, he refers to there being fifty-five items (see, for example, *ibid.* 200).

"THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS' MOTHER"

which bear the hallmarks of Irish influence.⁴ Other items in the collection, which have so far attracted less attention than the material of potential Irish origin, appear to have emanated for the most part from Carolingian Francia and Southern Europe.⁵ Despite the culturally hybrid nature of the work, however, virtually all scholars agree with Martin McNamara's conclusion that the *Catechesis Celtica* provides "a major witness to Irish ecclesiastical learning (biblical exegesis and homiletics) of the early Middle Ages."⁶

Despite its obvious importance for students of early Irish theology (not to mention the closely related fields of history, philosophy, literature, and law), no full edition of the text has yet been published. Wilmart edited only about a third of it, choosing those items he considered to be especially noteworthy.⁷ Robert E.

⁴ McNamara classifies each individual item into one of six categories based on his assessment of the degree of their Irish affiliations, ranging from "i. Strong Irish Affiliations" to "vi. Items with different (un-Irish?) Style," ultimately concluding that twenty-four items should be classified in category one, and another ten should be classified in category two, i.e., "ii. Probable, but less clear, Irish affiliations" (ibid., 200). On the Irish features of the text, see also, especially, Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire, S.J., "Irish Elements in the *Catechesis Celtica*," in *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibel und Mission / Ireland and Christendom: The Bible and the Missions*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 146-64.

⁵ In future studies, the non-Irish materials in the *Catechesis Celtica* should not be neglected in favor of close examination of only those items showing Irish influence. Without question, the hybrid nature of the document has a great deal to reveal about contacts between Irish and Continental spheres of influence during the early Middle Ages. We should ask, for example, why a Breton cleric (presumably with a predominantly Insular or heavily Insular-influenced education) working in the late tenth century would choose this particular admixture of texts. At the very least, we can learn much from the *Catechesis Celtica* about the state and nature of early medieval ecclesiastical learning on the frontier of Carolingian Europe and the Insular world.

⁶ McNamara, "Sources and Affiliations," 200.

⁷ Since Wilmart's partial, selective edition of the *Catechesis Celtica*, two individual items have been edited: "Ordo XIV—Ordo lectionum in ecclesia Sancti Petri," in *Les Ordines romani du haut moyen-âge*, ed. Michel

BRYAN CARELLA

McNally, on the other hand, had nearly completed a full edition of the text when he died in 1977, which has circulated ever since among some of his students, but (lamentably) has never been published or made widely available to a broader community of scholars. At present, the complete document has been assigned an editor by the Royal Irish Academy for the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina Scriptores Celtigenae* series, and is eagerly awaited. No doubt, once it appears, McNally's words will ring true:

With due respect to Dom Wilmart's scholarship, his edition of the *Catechesis Celtica* should be reworked with proper care for source analysis and the reproduction of the complete text. A careful study of the whole work will yield remarkable conclusions on the spirituality of the old Celts (Irish?).⁸

What is more, given the hybrid nature of the collection, the *Catechesis Celtica* has the potential to reveal a great deal about the nature of intellectual contacts between Ireland and the broader world of European Christendom during the early Middle Ages.

II. A Homily on "The Blessedness of Jesus' Mother": Its Background and Relationship to Other Genres of Irish Literature

Acknowledging that a complete edition of the *Catechesis Celtica* stands out presently as one of the most important *desiderata* in Hiberno-Latin studies, my goal in this article is far more limited. In what follows, I will focus on one item in the collection, namely a homily "On the Blessedness of Jesus' Mother".⁹ Specifically, my purpose here is to provide a translation of the text, for reasons I will explain below. Let me begin, however, with some background on the

Andrieu, 5 vols. (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense Bureaux, 1961), 3:39-41, and "Dies Dominica III," in Robert E. McNally, S.J., *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores, Pars I, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, vol. 108B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1973), 172-79 and 185-86.

⁸ McNally, *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores*, 179 n. 21.

⁹ fols. 24ra28-25ra5; McNamara 41; Wilmart 34; Rittmueller 39.

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

text in question, particularly its possible relationships to other genres of Irish literature.

The homily under discussion (which, for convenience, I will refer to as “the *Catechesis Celtica* homily,” though it is not the only one in the collection), takes as its base text for exposition Luke 11:27-28. This scriptural *locus* narrates an event reported only in Luke, where an unnamed woman notices Christ preaching in a crowd and, deeply impressed by his words, cries out to him in praise of his mother. As it appears in the *Catechesis Celtica*, the homilist abbreviates the passage with the phrase *et reliqua*, apparently feeling confident that he could rely on his audience’s knowledge of the full passage. Here, I have supplied the full text from the Vulgate, including in brackets those portions of the verse omitted by the homilist:

*Luke 11:27 [Factum est autem cum haec diceret extollens vocem quaedam mulier de turba dixit illi] beatus venter qui te portavit, et reliqua [et ubera quae suxisti <28> at ille dixit quippini beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt]*¹⁰

Luke 11:27 [And it came to pass, as he was saying these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him:] Blessed is the womb that bore you, *et reliqua* [and the paps that gave you suck. <28> But he said: Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.]¹¹

¹⁰ Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 79, l. 2. For the text of the Bible not recorded in the *Catechesis Celtica* (i.e., the portion I have supplied in brackets), here and throughout I have used Robert Weber, ed., et al., *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, fifth edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

¹¹ All translations of the scriptural text are based on the Douay-Rheims version. I have updated obvious archaisms, albeit sparingly. On a small number of occasions, I have rendered the verb tense more precisely than it appears in the Douay-Rheims translation, in order to show the harmony between the scriptural citations and the surrounding text. Finally, where the homily’s scriptural citations differ from the mainstream Vulgate version, I have translated them as they appear in the homily.

BRYAN CARELLA

Significantly, the homilist imputes a deeply emotional response to the woman, particularly at the beauty of Christ's physical appearance, which he describes in some detail:

Videns haec mulier Christum inter turbas praedicantem, ammiransque ipsius nobilitatem, necnon et formae pulchritudinem, audiensque eloquium cum praedicatione gratia placitum, et conspiciens etiam uirtutes innumerabiles quas saluator operabatur, haec omnia prudenter aspiciens ex intimo cordis affectu hoc uerbum inter turbas clamauit: Beatus uenter qui te portauit, et reliqua. Nobilis enim fuerat qui de regno genitus id est de regibus natus est, ut de eo dictum est: Liber generationis ihesu christi filii David. Hinc etiam de nobilitate ipsius ac de sapientia et regno deus per Hieremiam dixit: Suscitabo Deo germen iustum et regnabit ... rex ... De formae autem ipsius pulchritudine profetatum est sic: Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum. Item de eo dictum est: Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis.¹²

This woman, upon seeing Christ preaching among the crowds, was admiring both his nobility and the beauty of his form; and while she was listening to the divinely-favored eloquence of his preaching, and as she was gazing upon the innumerable miracles that Christ was performing, she — discreetly beholding all these things — shouted among the crowds these words from the inmost passion of her heart: *Blessed is the womb that bore you* [Luke 11:27], etc. For noble he was, he who was of noble birth, that is, he was descended from kings, as was said concerning him: *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David* [Matt. 1:1]. Hence also, concerning his nobility, wisdom, and noble birth, God said through Jeremiah: *I will raise up to*

¹² Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 79, ll. 3-12, 15-17.

"THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS' MOTHER"

God a just branch: and a king shall reign [Jer. 23:5]
. . . However, concerning the beauty of his form, it was prophesied: [*You are*] *beautiful above the sons of men* [Ps. 44:3]. Likewise concerning him, it was also said: *Grace is poured abroad in your lips . . .* [Ps. 44:3]¹³

This portrayal of Christ stood out to Martin McNamara for its similarities to descriptions of several Irish legendary kings. Regarding this passage, he writes:

I have failed to find a source for this in Latin texts. However, what is predicated of Christ in [this homily] corresponds very closely to the description of the ideal Irish king as found in two Old-Irish texts *Aided Chonchubuir . . .* and in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga . . .* The kings in question are Conchobar, son of Cathbad and Conaire Eterscél [i.e., Conaire Mór]. The description is virtually identical in both texts and is in partly alliterative triads. Of Conchobar we read (ed. Meyer p. 6; trans. p. 7):¹⁴

And it was then that the women of Connaught begged Conchobar to come aside so that they might see his shape. For there was not on earth the shape of a human being like the shape of Conchobar, both for beauty and figure and dress (*etir chruth 7 deilb 7 dechelt*), for size and symmetry and proportion (*etir mét 7 córe 7 cutrummae*), for eye and hair and whiteness, for wisdom and for manners and eloquence (*etir gáis 7 laig 7 erlabra*), for raiment and nobleness and equipment, for weapons and wealth

¹³ All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

¹⁴ Here, McNamara refers to Kuno Meyer, *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes*, Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series 14 (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1906).

BRYAN CARELLA

and dignity, for bearing and valour and race (*etir gnáis 7 gaisced 7 cenél*).¹⁵

This potential connection between secular Irish vernacular literature and a conservative, Latin religious text like the *Catechesis Celtica* homily under discussion raises intriguing questions about the relationship between the literate communities (or community) out of which both bodies of literature emerged.¹⁶

In addition to the possible influence of secular Irish kingship ideology on this homily, McNamara also notes a possible connection between this text and Irish vernacular hagiography. Upon Christ's response to the unnamed woman in Luke 11:28 who praised him, [*A*]t ille dixit quippini beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt ("But he said: Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it"), the homilist elaborated by explaining both her interior motivations (strikingly) and (even more strikingly) Christ's interior understanding of her sentiments:

Hinc ista mulier haec omnia ammirans dixit: *Beatus venter qui te portavit, et reliqua, quasi similibus uerbis diceret: Utinam mihi filius esset. Cui salvator hanc mentis deuotionem in uerbis conspiciens ad ipsius consolationem dixit: Immo beati qui audiunt et custodiunt verbum dei quasi diceret: Optas ut mihi mater fieres, quod est in potestate tua. Si enim uerbum dei custodieris, mihi mater eris nec Mariae inuidebis. Beatior est enim Maria percipiendo fidem Christi quam capiendo carnem ipsius. Hinc alibi: Extendens manum in discipulos suos dixit: Ecce mater mea et fratres mei. Quicumque fecerit*

¹⁵ McNamara, "Sources and Affiliations," 226-27. On the significance of physical beauty for Irish sacral kings, see Damian McManus, "Good-looking and Irresistible: the Hero from Early Irish Saga to Classical Poetry," *Ériu* 59 (2009): 57-109.

¹⁶ I have pursued some of these matters in depth elsewhere, in "The Pulchritude of Christ in a *Catechesis Celtica* (Vat. Reg. Lat. 49) Homily On Luke 11:27-28 and Irish Vernacular Literature Of Sacral Kingship" (for future publication).

"THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS' MOTHER"

*voluntatem patris mei qui in celis est ipse meus frater et soror mea est.*¹⁷

Hence this woman, admiring all these things, said: *Blessed is the womb that bore you*, etc., just as if she might say with similar words: "Would that he might have been my son." To whom the savior, perceiving the devotion of the sentiment in her words said for her guidance: *On the contrary, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it*; just as if he might say: "You wish that you were my mother because it is in your power. But, if you will keep the word of God, you will be my mother and you will not begrudge Mary. For Mary is more blessed for perceiving faith in Christ than in receiving his flesh." Hence, elsewhere: <49> *And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren.* <50> *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister* [Matt 12:49-50].

In reference to this passage, McNamara notes, "This is all very much in keeping with the Irish reference to Brigid and other saints as mothers of Christ,"¹⁸ a feature of their belief for which they were apparently on occasion mocked by more mainstream Christians on the Continent.¹⁹

¹⁷ Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 80, ll. 30-39.

¹⁸ On the notion of Brigid and other saints sharing in Mary's motherhood of Christ, McNamara refers to James Carney, "Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan," in *Early Irish Poetry*, ed. James Carney (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1965), 45-57, at 50-52; James Carney, "Old Ireland and Her Poetry," in *Old Ireland*, ed. Robert E. McNally (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965), 147-72, at 166-67 and Peter O'Dwyer, *Mary: A History of Devotion in Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1988), 32-33. For the most recent scholarship on the topic, see also Jenny C. Bledsoe, "St Ita of Killeedy and Spiritual Motherhood in the Irish Hagiographical Tradition," *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 32 (2013): 1-30.

¹⁹ John Hennig, "Irish Saints in the Liturgical and Artistic Tradition of Central Europe," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 61 (1943): 181-92, at 190; see

BRYAN CARELLA

McNamara's identification of potential points of contact between this homily and other Irish vernacular genres raises compelling questions about the relationships (or identity) between different communities of ecclesiastical and secular intellectual cultures in early medieval Ireland, (and foundations under Irish influence abroad) during the early Middle Ages. Since this topic has not yet been investigated fully in scholarship (particularly as the matter pertains to Hiberno-Latin literature) and, what is more, since this homily has, in my estimation, especially great potential to yield new insights into this neglected and fertile area of research, I have undertaken to translate it here. My hope is that by making the text conveniently available in translation, scholars of Irish literature in various specialties who otherwise might have overlooked this little-known text will take notice of it and exploit its potential. To the best of my ability, I have included notes that I hope will prove interesting to others and pave the way for further research.

III. Notes on the Hiberno-Latin Features of the Homily on "The Blessedness of Jesus' Mother"

While the Latin Hibernicisms in the *Catechesis Celtica* as a whole have been summarized by others more thoroughly and expertly than I could hope to accomplish here,²⁰ I will point out briefly in the paragraphs that follow some of these features in the homily under discussion (beyond the potentially Irish, or Irish-influenced motifs I outlined in the previous section) that have not been identified in previous scholarship. Relying primarily on the evidence adduced in the last section, Martin McNamara concluded that "[t]he evidence seems to indicate that the greater part of this homily or comment on Luke 11:27 has strong Irish affiliations."²¹ Thus, he included it in the first of six categories of texts in the *Catechesis Celtica* based on his analysis of the relative degree of their Irish affiliations; that is, he included it among those texts

also in this volume satirical poem, Erfurt, in Thomas Owen Clancy, "Saints in the Scottish Landscape," p. 31.

²⁰ See footnotes 2 and 4 above.

²¹ McNamara, "Sources and Affiliations," 228.

"THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS' MOTHER"

showing the strongest and most detectable Irish features.²² While McNamara's evidence makes the case by itself, there is more evidence supporting the argument in favor of an Irish origin of the text that warrants mention.

Orthographically, the homily on "The Blessedness of Jesus' Mother" shares many of the same features as the rest of the *Catechesis Celtica*. These include a number of typically Insular abbreviations (among many that are not) despite the fact that the script is Caroline miniscule and the name of the scribe — Guilhelm — is hardly Celtic. Very distinctively, the scribe of this homily (as throughout much of the rest of the document) used the Irish abbreviation "+" (i.e., an "I" with an oblique stroke through it from the left to the right) for Latin *inter*.²³ Likewise, he also used a number of other common Insular abbreviations, including *i.* for *id est*, "h" with a tail for *autem*,²⁴ and *rl* for *reliqua* (which appears in this text exclusively in the phrase *et reliqua* to signify truncation of a scriptural *locus*). All that the usage of these abbreviations indicates, however, is that the text was transcribed by an Insular (or Insularly-trained) scribe at some point during the history of its transmission (if indeed it was transmitted in some manner prior to the form in which it has survived); it does not in itself unequivocally support the case in favor of an Irish origin for the text.

Beyond the supplementary evidence of these abbreviations, several other components of this text suggest Irish affiliations. These

²² *Ibid.*, 200.

²³ See W. M. Lindsay, *Notae Latinae. An Account of Abbreviation in Latin MSS. of the Early Miniscule Period (c. 700-850)* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1915; repr. 2013), 111, where he states that this abbreviation for *inter* is "retained in Insular script, especially Irish and Welsh (with Cornish) types . . ." and Doris Bains, *A Supplement to Notae Latinae (Abbreviations in Latin MSS. of 850-1050 A.D.)* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1936), 20, who says that this abbreviation for *inter* "persists in Irish, Welsh and Anglosaxon [*sic*] script. We have no examples in Continental MSS. except one from the Insular center Laon (no. 468)." See also, Ó Laoghaire, "Irish Elements," 157; W. M. Lindsay, "A New Clue to the Emendation of Latin Texts," *Classical Philology* 11 (1916): 270-77, at 274.

²⁴ Lindsay, *Notae Latinae*, 13-15 and Bains, *Supplement*, 3.

BRYAN CARELLA

include the reference to the Eusebian canons at the heading of the homily, a feature which Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire describes as “a characteristic of Irish commentaries on the gospels.”²⁵ Furthermore, the homilist cited Apponius’ commentary on the Song of Songs, apparently the only commentary on the Canticles known in early medieval Ireland.²⁶ Finally, the loosely integrated account of Christ’s Harrowing of Hell with which the homily ends seems very much in line with Irish theological sensibilities.²⁷ When all this evidence is taken together, it is possible to conclude with a high degree of certainty that this text originated within an Irish sphere of influence and was composed by a cleric with an Insular Celtic education.

IV. Translation and Notes

For the translation that follows, I have used the edited text provided by Dom. André Wilmart in *Analecta Regimensia* in consultation with a digital reproduction of the manuscript, Vatican Reg. lat. 49. In doing so, I have found no significant occasions where it was necessary to question either Wilmart’s transcriptions nor his suggested corrections, which are relatively few and minor.²⁸ Stylistically, I have aimed at producing a clearly-readable text in modern English that is closely faithful to the original. On the handful of occasions when these two criteria came into conflict, however, I chose in every case to sacrifice readability in favor of faithfulness to the original, albeit with as little loss to clarity as possible, in full

²⁵ Ó Laoghaire, “Irish Elements,” 154.

²⁶ McNamara, “Sources and Affiliations,” 228; id., “The Irish Tradition of Biblical Exegesis, A.D. 550-800,” in *Iohannes Scottus Ériugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics*, ed. Gerd Van Riel et al. (Leuven, Belgium: University Press, 1996), 25-54, at 30; Bernard de Vregille and Louis Neyrand, eds, *Apponii in Canticum Canticorum Expositionem*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. 19 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), xxxvi.

²⁷ See, for example, Michael W. Herren and Shirley Ann Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, Studies in Celtic History 20 (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2002), 268-70.

²⁸ The one exception is his suggested reading of *gen(tium)* for MS *gēn* (24ra36, Wilmart, *Analecta Regimensia*, 79, l. 9 and n. 6). Instead, I have read this as *gen(itu)*. See note “Catechesis Celtica,” p. 96 note 5 below.

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

knowledge that most scholars interested in pursuing a detailed study of the text would do so in close consultation with the Latin. I intend my translation, therefore, only as a convenient bridge to the original text, quickly to be discarded by those who wish to delve more deeply into it. Above all, my primary goal is to draw attention to this fascinating work (and others like it). Finally, in my notes — where I have not pointed out mechanical issues of translation, problems with the text, sources, or other practical matters — I have allowed myself free rein to raise questions which, at times, may seem very speculative. Such an approach is not often welcomed by medieval scholars, least of all Hiberno-Latinists and Celticists generally. Acknowledging that criticisms of my practice will certainly arise, let me assert that my purpose here is not simply to give voice to idle conjecture; rather my hope is that doing so might inspire others with different areas of expertise to apply their skills to the purpose of unearthing the treasures that this all-but-unnoticed text (and many others like it in the *Catechesis Celtica* and similar collections) might yield.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following scholars whose comments at the 33rd Harvard Celtic Colloquium contributed to this article: Dorothy Africa, Alexandra Bergholm, Thomas Owen Clancy, and Catherine McKenna. In addition, regarding the translation which follows, thanks are owed to the anonymous reader who commented thoroughly and graciously on my translation (and helped to make it much better text as a result), I would like to thank Shannon Ambrose, Fr. Roger Corriveau, A.A., and Kathleen Fisher for their helpful comments both on my translation and the significance of its contents. Of course, all mistakes throughout are entirely my own.

**CATECHESIS CELTICA, Homily on
“The Blessedness of Jesus’ Mother” (fol. 24ra28-25ra5)**

[1-2] ¹ Luke sang² this testimony of chapter 132 from canon X³: *And it came to pass, as Jesus was saying these things* [Luke 11:27], etc.

[3-8] This woman, upon seeing Christ preaching among the crowds, was admiring both his nobility and the beauty of his form; and while she was listening to the divinely-favored eloquence of his preaching, and as she was gazing upon the innumerable miracles that Christ was performing, she — discreetly beholding all these things — shouted

¹ Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, Homily, 79-82, ll. 1-121. The numbers in brackets refer to the lines in Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 79-82.

² Although the gospel of Luke is associated with music and poetry — the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), the *Benedictus* (Luke 1:68-79) and the *Gloria in Excelsis* (Luke 2:10-14) all derive from this gospel — the use of the verb *canere* here to describe the recitation of this obviously non-poetic passage, seems odd. One cannot help but recall Virgil’s *Arma virumque cano*. Here too, use of the Old Irish verb *canaid* (cognate with Latin *canere*), most basically meaning “sings, recites” but also “speaks, tells, announces, utters,” and perhaps even more apropos for the present context, in compounds such as *for-cain* meaning “teaches instructs,” and secondarily, “admonishes, enjoins, tells,” and even “prophesies, predicts” may have inspired the homilist’s use of *canere* in this context. All definitions from Old Irish are taken from the *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language*, ed. Gregory Toner (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007-2013), accessed February 7, 2014, www.dil.ie. I suspect, however, that the homilist’s awareness of Luke’s association with lyricism is what motivated his usage of the *canere* in this instance.

³ The *capitula* referred to here signify the way scripture was divided before the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, when the current chapter/verse divisions in the biblical text were established. Canon X refers to the Eusebian canons, which made comparisons between the gospels, identifying passages that covered the same material (or had no analogue) in the other books. Canon X, which the author refers to here, is the canon enumerating *capitula* which contain material found only in Luke.

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

among the crowds these words from the inmost passion of her heart:⁴
Blessed is the womb that bore you [Luke 11:27], etc.

[8-10] For noble he was, he who was of noble birth⁵, that is, he was descended from kings, as was said concerning him: *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David* [Matt. 1:1].

[10-15] Hence also, concerning his nobility, wisdom, and noble birth, God said through Jeremiah: <5> *I will raise up to God a just branch: and a king shall reign, and he shall be both a king and a wise man, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.* <6> *In those days shall Juda be saved, and Israel shall dwell confidently: and this is the name that they shall call him: the Lord our just one* [Jer. 23:5-6].

[15-19] However, concerning the beauty of his form, it was prophesied: [*You are*] *beautiful above the sons of men* [Ps. 44:3]. Likewise concerning him, it was also said: *Grace is poured abroad in your lips; therefore has God blessed you forever* [Ps. 44:3]. Likewise: *Because of truth and meekness and justice: and your right hand shall conduct you wonderfully* [Ps. 44:5].⁶

[19-25] Paul too, admiring his wisdom, said: [<2>...*Christ Jesus:*] <3> *In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* [Col. 2:2-3]. Likewise, concerning miracles, he said through the prophet:⁷

⁴ The sudden, passionate response on the woman’s behalf reminds one, for example, of heroines in Irish vernacular literature, such as Deirdre or Gráinne, when each was all at once overwhelmed by the sight of their respective male love objects.

⁵ The manuscript reads *gēn*. Wilmart, in a note, suggests *genitus*. Following the advice of the anonymous reader, however, I have read this abbreviation as *genitu*, hence *de regno genitu* “of royal birth.”

⁶ It is necessary to read the whole passage to understand why this quotation is apropos here: Ps. 44:5: *specie tua et pulchritudine tua et intende prospere procede et regna propter veritatem et mansuetudinem et iustitiam et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua* “with your comeliness and your beauty set out, proceed prosperously, and reign. Because of truth and meekness and justice: and your right hand shall conduct you wonderfully.”

⁷ What follows is the homilist’s citation of Luke 4:18-19, where Luke invokes the words of Isaiah 61:1-2. As this passage from Luke is cited in

BRYAN CARELLA

<18> *The spirit is upon me, with which he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the contrite of heart, <19> to preach deliverance to captives, to restore sight to the blind, and moreover to call out the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward [Luke: 4:18-19], and to comfort all mourners [cf. Is. 61:2].*

[25-29] Jesus performed these miracles, as they are narrated in the gospels; and they also caused the greatest admiration in the people

the text, portions directly from Isaiah would appear to have been inserted. Here is the citation as it appears in the Latin original of the homily: Luke 18: *Spiritus super me est eo quod unxit me evangelizare pauperibus misit me sanare contritos corde <19> praedicare captivis remissionem et caecis visum restituere, vocare autem annum domini acceptabilem et diem retributionis, consulari omnes lugentes.* As it would appear, the citation in the homily seems to blend elements of both scriptural passages. To compare this citation to the full text of both scriptural passages, I have put in bold those portions of Luke 4:18-19 and Isaiah 61:1-2 that correspond closely (in exact vocabulary, if not in their form and inflection) to the passage as it appears in the homily: Compare Vulgate Luke 4:18-19: ***Spiritus Domini super me propter quod unxit me evangelizare pauperibus misit me praedicare captivis remissionem et caecis visum dimittere confractos in remissionem praedicare annum Domini acceptum et diem retributionis*** “**The spirit of the Lord is upon me. Wherefore he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me <19 > to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind,** to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach **the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward**” to Isaiah 61:1-2: *Spiritus Domini super me eo quod unxit Dominus me ad adnuntiandum mansuetis misit me ut mederer contritis corde et praedicarem captivis indulgentiam et clausis apertionem <2> ut praedicarem annum placabilem Domini et diem ultionis Deo nostro ut consolarer omnes lugentes* “**The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me: he has sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives,** and deliverance to them that are shut up, <2> to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort all who mourn.” Close, comparative analysis of the scriptural text in this homily, and in the *Catechesis Celtica* in general, has the potential to reveal much about which version of the Bible the author(s) of the *Catechesis Celtica* used, and might provide a clue to his/their cultural and educational heritage.

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

who saw them, as was prophesied by Isaiah⁸: *They will remember your ways* [Is. 64:5?] *and stand in awe at all of your wonders* [cf. Ps. 76:12? Neh. 9:17?]⁹

[30-32] Hence this woman, admiring all these things, said: *Blessed is the womb that bore you*, etc., just as if she might say with similar words¹⁰: “Would that he might have been my son.”

⁸ It is interesting that the homilist would cite Isaiah in this immediate context, where Christ’s beauty is praised. In patristic exegesis, where Isaiah was usually understood as a christological prophecy, Isaiah 53:1-4 was commonly cited as evidence that Christ was not physically beautiful at all, but rather humble in appearance and unsightily to look upon. Concerning this scriptural passage, there was ongoing debate among the Church Fathers over whether Isaiah’s description of the messiah should be taken as literally true, or figurative in some sense. It reads, *quis credidit auditui nostro et brachium Domini cui revelatum est <2> et ascendet sicut virgultum coram eo et sicut radix de terra sitiendi non est species ei neque decor et vidimus eum et non erat aspectus et desideravimus eum <3> despectum et novissimum virorum virum dolorum et scientem infirmitatem et quasi absconditus vultus eius et despectus unde nec reputavimus eum <4> vere languores nostros ipse tulit et dolores nostros ipse portavit et nos putavimus eum quasi leprosum et percussum a Deo et humiliatum* “who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? <2> And he shall grow up as a tender plant before him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: there is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him: <3> Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. <4> Surely, he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.”

⁹ It is not immediately clear what passage or combination of passages the homilist is recalling here.

¹⁰ This gesture, where the homilist describes the interior motivations first of the unnamed woman in the crowd who noticed Christ preaching and then later of Christ himself, is a striking mode of exegesis. In these cases, several of which occur in this text, introduced with words similar to *quasi similibus uerbis diceret* “just as if she might say with similar words,” the homilist purports, implicitly, to have access to the inner mind of these characters in scripture — including Christ — which he opens up and interprets for the

BRYAN CARELLA

[32-37] To whom the savior, perceiving the devotion of the sentiment in her words said for her guidance: *On the contrary, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it; just as if he might say: "You wish that you were my mother because it is in your power. But, if you will keep the word of God, you will be my mother and you will not begrudge Mary. For Mary is more blessed for perceiving¹¹ faith in Christ than in receiving his flesh."*¹²

[37-41] Hence, elsewhere: <49> *And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren. <50> Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister* [Matt. 12:49-50]. He said this, however, when it was said to him: [And one said unto him:] *Behold your mother and your brethren stand without, seeking you* [Matt 12:47].

[41-46] Regarding this matter, Augustine says: "People are blessed, if they are joined by a carnal relationship to just and holy people, but also if, by obeying and imitating, they cling to what they have been taught and their morals,"¹³ and then, "to the brothers of Christ, that

reader. One might seek, I expect fruitfully, to find connections between this gesture in Hiberno-Latin religious literature and the development of narrative interiority in medieval Irish secular literature (and medieval Welsh literature, for that matter), where interior characterization is a relatively poorly developed (or consciously avoided?) feature of narrative style.

¹¹ Notice the verbal parallelism: *Beatior est enim Maria percipiendo fidem Christi quam capiendo carnem ipsius.*

¹² This last sentence, *Beatior est enim Maria percipiendo fidem Christi quam capiendo carnem ipsius* "For Mary is more blessed for gaining faith in Christ than in receiving his flesh" corresponds to Augustine, *De sancta virginitate, Sancti Avreli Avgvstini* chapter III, *Beatior ergo Maria percipiendo fidem Christi quam concipiendo carnem Christi. Sancti Avreli Avgvstini*, ed. Iosephvs Zycha, *Corpvs Scriptorvm Ecclesiasticorvm Latinorvm*, Sect. V, Pars III (Vienna: Academiae Litterarvm Caesareae), 237, ll. 11-12.

¹³ *Beati sunt homines, si iustis et sanctis carnis propinquitate iungantur, sed si eorum doctrinae ac moribus obediendo atque immitando [sic.] cohaerescunt* (Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 80, ll. 41-43), cf. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* chapter III (Santi Avreli Avgvstini, 237, ll. 9-12): *hec inde beatos esse homines, si iustis et sanctis carnis propinquitate iunguntur,*

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

is, to his blood relations after the flesh, who did not believe in him: what benefit was that kinship? In the same way, Mary’s maternal relationship would not have benefitted her at all, if she had not borne Christ in her heart more blessedly than in the flesh.”¹⁴

[47-48] Hence what Christ said [immediately thereafter] was clear to each one: *Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he is my brother*, etc. [Matt. 12:50].

[48-57] For he considers holy men and holy women [to be] brothers and sisters, because they are co-heirs in the heavenly inheritance. For his mother is the whole Church, since by the grace of God she gives birth to his limbs, that is, the faithful. Likewise, his mother is every pious soul, carrying out the will of his father with the most fertile charity regarding those with whom she is in labor,¹⁵ *until he may be formed in them* [cf. Gal. 4:19]. So therefore, Mary — carrying out the will of God according to the flesh — is only the mother of Christ.¹⁶ Spiritually, however, this woman¹⁷ who was admiring

sed si eorum doctrinae ac moribus oboediendo atque imitando cohaerescunt?

¹⁴ *deinde Fratribus Christi, id est secundum carnem cognatis, qui in eum non crediderunt, quid profuit illa cognatio? Sic et materna propinquitas nihil Mariae profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde quam carne gestasset* (Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 80, ll. 43-46, cf. Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* chapter III (Sancti Avreli Avgvstini, ed. Zycha, 237, ll. 9-12): *denique fratribus eius, id est secundum carnem cognatis, qui non in eum crediderunt, quid profuit illa cognatio? sic et materna propinquitas nihil Mariae profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde quam carne gestasset.*

¹⁵ The final portion, *in his quae parturit*, is difficult. The use of *parturit* was inspired by Galatians 4:19: *filioli mei quos iterum parturio donec formetur Christus in vobis* “my little children, **with whom I am in labor** again, until Christ be formed in you.” As best I can, I render the passage as “regarding those with whom she is in labor.” Notice the figurative use of language describing female fertility and giving birth.

¹⁶ The text of the Catechesis Celtica homily reads: *Hinc unicuique manifestum est quod dominus dixit: Quicumque fecerit voluntatem patris mei ipse frater meus, et reliqua. Fratres enim et sorores habet sanctos uiros et sanctas feminas, quoniam sunt illi in caelesti hereditate coheredes. Mater est enim tota aeclesia, quia membra eius, id est fideles, per dei gratiam parit. Item mater est eius omnis anima pia, faciens uoluntatem patris eius*

BRYAN CARELLA

Christ is the whole Church, which — longing for the presence of the Savior from the outer limits of the earth — cried out [collectively], saying: *To you have I cried from the ends of the earth, O Lord* [Ps. 60:3].

[57-60] Which also [i.e., the Church], longing for its redeemer in Christ, called out with the universal voice of all peoples: *Arise, O Lord, help us* [Ps. 43:26], up to [the end of the passage, which reads] *your [name]*. Hence, too, it said elsewhere: *Show us, O Lord* [Ps. 84:8], up to [the end of the passage, which reads], *[give] to us*.

[60-64] And so Christ is salvation¹⁸; he who had [always] been salvific for all peoples, as was prophesied beforehand concerning

fecundissima caritate in his quae parturit donec in eis ipse formetur. Sic ergo et Maria faciens uoluntatem dei corporaliter tantummodo Christi mater est. Spiritualiter autem haec mulier Christum ammirans tota est ecclesia, quae praesentiam saluatoris desiderans ab extremis terrae finibus clamauit dicens: A finibus terrae ad te clamauit domine (Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 80-81, ll. 47-57). Cf. Augustine, *De sancta uirginitate* chapter III (Sancti Auerli Avgvstini, ed. Zycha, 239, ll. 7-20); I have here included the whole passage from *De sancta uirginitate*, overstriking those portions of the text omitted by the *Catechesis Celtica* homilist, since the nature of his adaptation may be significant: ~~*Hinc enim et Maria laudabilius atque beatius Christi mater est secundum supra memoratam eius sententiam: quicumque facit uoluntatem patris mei qui in caelis est, ipse mihi frater et soror et mater est. has sibi omnes propinquitates in populo, quem redemit, spiritualiter exhibet: fratres et sorores habet sanctos uiros et sanctas feminas, quoniam sunt illi in caelesti hereditate coheredes. mater eius est tota ecclesia, quia membra eius, id est, fideles eius per dei gratiam ipsa utique parit. item mater eius est omnis anima pia faciens uoluntatem patris eius fecundissima caritate, in his quos parturit, donec in eis ipse formetur. Maria ergo faciens uoluntatem dei corporaliter Christi tantummodo mater est, spiritualiter autem et soror et mater.*~~ Notice, in particular, how the last sentence in the *Catechesis Celtica* homily expands substantially upon Augustine.

¹⁷ "This woman" refers back to the woman from Luke 11:27.

¹⁸ *Salutare* is the neuter of the adjective *salutaris*, *salutare*, here used substantively. This usage is common in scripture.

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

him. Hence, too, Saint Simeon¹⁹ — a man full of the holy spirit²⁰ — looking with fleshly eyes on this man whom the whole Church prayed for and prophesied about in earlier times, testified concerning him, saying: *Now send your servant, O Lord* [Luke 2:29], etc.

[65-71] And so this woman, seeing that wondrous light of all peoples, said: *Blessed is the womb that bore you*, etc., just as if she would have said: “Blessed are they who prophesied about you, but more blessed are those who see you,” as he said: <16> *But blessed are your eyes that see, and your ears that hear.* <17> *For, amen, I say to you, many prophets and many just men have desired to see the things that you have seen, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you have heard and have not heard them* [Matt. 13:16-17].

[71-74] It is clear that many people have desired to see him as, [for example], his face was praised and his voice longed for by the Church in Song of Songs, as was said: *Show me your face, and let your voice sound in my ears: for your voice is sweet, and your face comely* [Song of Songs 2:14].

¹⁹ The Simeon referred to here is the man named in Luke 2:25 who, in an episode described in Luke 2:25-32, saw the child Christ in the temple in Jerusalem, an event which he had been promised by the holy spirit to witness. Immediately, Simeon recognized the young Jesus as the messiah and announced it out loud. For this reason, Simeon is considered to be the first prophet to declare that Christ had come.

²⁰ This description of Simeon, perhaps inspired by Luke 2:25: *homo iste iustus et timoratus expectans consolationem Israhel et Spiritus Sanctus erat in eo*, “this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the holy ghost was in him,” is loaded. The descriptor, *spiritu sancto repletus* (Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 81, l. 63) “[a man] full of the holy spirit,” echoes similar phrases used elsewhere in Irish literature to signify a virtuous pagan infused with *naturale bonum*, i.e., “natural good.” The poet Dubthach moccu Lugair, for example, is described in the pseudo-historical prologue to the *Senchas Már* as *lestar lán do rath in Spirta Naím* “a vessel full of the holy spirit;” see John Carey, “An Edition of the Pseudo-historical Prologue to the *Senchas Már*,” *Ériu* 45 (1994), 1-32 at 11 and 18. Certainly, this descriptor (used in the Bible, after all) appears in other traditions. That said, I would argue that it carries special significance in an Irish context.

BRYAN CARELLA

[74-81] In this sense, this voice is that of the Church praying for [his] presence; the “sweet voice” is the preaching of Christ, promising a life to come; Christ is a beautiful face, which is called the face of the Father. Also, regarding his perceptible form and spiritual beauty, the voice of the Church in Song of Songs said: <10> *My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands*; <11> *his head is as the finest gold; his locks as branches of palm trees, black as ravens*; <12> *his eyes as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk* [Song of Songs 5:10-12], and completely desirable [Song of Songs 5:16].

[81-89] He is *white* because he is the light of the world and the sun of justice; *ruddy* [because of] the stab of the lance [when he was] on the cross; *chosen out of thousands* [because he is] surpassing all the angels and saints; *his head is as the finest gold* is [because of] the splendor of his divinity; *His locks as branches* are the spirits of saints bound together in good works. Likewise, *his locks* are the parables of the scriptures, which are *black* because of the obscurity of the mysteries; or because [*his*] *locks* are the heavenly miracles.²¹ *His eyes [are] as doves*, that is, they are the doctors of the Church because, just as the eyes lead the way for the body, so too do the doctors lead the way for the Church; *upon brooks of waters*: [because he is] the topic of the words of the prophets and the apostles.

89-92] *Completely desirable*,²² because I am not able to express his beauty, to which end I am spent of words.²³ *Completely desirable*, because they are all desirable who devote themselves to him.

²¹ It is perhaps significant that the predominant colors invoked in this passage – white, red (ruddy), and black – in vernacular Irish literature are often associated with physical beauty, particularly male beauty. Compare, for example, Deirdre’s description to Lebarcham of her ideal love in *Longas mac nUislenn*.

²² This is a phrase from Song of Songs 5:16. Apponius’s commentary, however, does not seem to have inspired the homilist here. Cf., de Vregille and Neyrand, *Apponii in Canticum Canticorum*, 206.

²³ From a narrative perspective, the choice to use the first person here — where, in effect, the homilist introduces himself into the text — is no doubt significant.

"THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS' MOTHER"

[92-94] This [matter] might be investigated more diligently, if anyone will have the opportunity to do so. Hence it is clear from what has already been said, that for a long time before this it was anticipated that Christ is the one who is coming.

[95-97] This voice also harmonizes with the heavens: *Blessed is the womb* [Luke 11:27], etc., when it was said: *Lift up your gates, O you princes* [Ps 23:7 or 9²⁴], up to [the end of the passage, which reads] *King of Glory*.

[97-98] Here, the heavenly orders [i.e., the angels²⁵] are commanded by the holy spirit to open the gates of heaven, which Adam's sin had closed for mankind, so that the King of Glory might enter.

[98-100] That is, the holy spirit bringing with him [i.e., with Christ] out of hell [and] up to heaven those [souls] whom the devil had seized beforehand and up to that time on account of the sins of Adam.

[100-105] And so the angels, seeing Christ among the army of saints freed from hell and the saints rejoicing and giving thanks to God for their liberation, both [i.e., both the angels and the saints] say with exultation: *Blessed is the womb*, etc., just as if they had said: "It is good for us that you accepted a body, since the assumption of the flesh led to a great state of perfection for us, as is manifest to everyone."

[105-108] For through the assumption of the flesh of Christ, all human offspring collectively was redeemed from the power of the ancient enemy²⁶; and through his incarnation, the grace of baptism

²⁴ Ps. 23:7 and 23:9 read identically.

²⁵ The phrase *gradus caelestes* (MS *caelestis*; Wilmart, *Analecta Reginensia*, 82, l. 97; cf. in other texts *gradus caeli*), literally "heavenly orders" (or "orders of heaven"), is used with a special meaning in Irish (or, more broadly, Celtic) religious literature, meaning "angels." See McNamara, "Sources and Affiliations," 190; Paul Grosjean, "A propos du manuscrit 49 de la Reine Christine," *Analecta Bollandiana* 54 (1936), 113-36, at 121-22.

²⁶ This emphasis on Christ's incarnation — as opposed to his crucifixion, death, and resurrection — as the primary cause for the redemption of

BRYAN CARELLA

was given to Adam in order to expunge the sin of the parents [= original sin?] and the sin of everyone.²⁷

[108-110] And likewise, penance was granted to everyone on account of the incarnation. Likewise, heaven was opened up for all and hell was closed on account of [his] humility.

[110-115] Likewise, all his saints will dwell in heaven, and — having been released from [their] sins — they will rejoice there in peace, as it was said: <15> *The spirit will be poured upon us from on high*; <17> *and the work of justice shall be peace and security, and the service of justice [shall be] quietness, forever.* <18> *And my people shall sit in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest* [Is. 32:15, 17-18].

mankind is unexpected. Elsewhere, I have compared the focus in this passage on the physical nature of Christ and its implications for universal salvation to *In Tenga Bithnua* sections 12-14; see John Carey, *In Tenga Bithnua, Apocrypha Hiberniae II, Apocalyptic 1* (Brepols: Turnhout, 2009), 115, 117, and 119. See also Claire Stancliffe, "Creator and Creation: A Preliminary Investigation of Early Irish Views and Their Relationship to Biblical and Patristic Traditions," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 58 (2009): 9-27, at 25.

²⁷ The homilist may here be referring to the patristic notion, apparently first articulated by Ephraim the Syriac and later spread widely throughout the Christian West, that Adam's skull was buried on Golgotha immediately below the Cross. Christ's blood, so the idea goes, poured forth upon it, thus redeeming Adam as a kind of baptism. This idea is referred to in the poems of Blathmac, stanza 57, and therefore was known to the Irish early on: *Toesca toerbraith coimdedh dil / ro-bathais mullach nÁdaim, / dég ad-rumedair int eú / cruchae Crist ina béulu* "The flowing blood from the body of the dear Lord baptised the head of Adam, for the shaft of the cross of Christ had aimed at his mouth," James Carney, *The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan*, Irish Texts Society 47 (Dublin: The Educational Company of Ireland, 1964), 21. Acknowledging that the *Catechesis Celtica* homilist was likely drawing on this patristic tradition, it is nonetheless surprising (and no doubt significant for reasons I cannot explain here) that the *Catechesis Celtica* homilist attributed Adam's baptism (and the subsequent redemption of mankind) to have resulted in the first instance from Christ's incarnation; not directly and explicitly as a result of his death, crucifixion and resurrection.

“THE BLESSEDNESS OF JESUS’ MOTHER”

[115-120] Also, concerning this perpetual residence of the saints in heaven, Isaiah prophesied, saying: <9> *They will dwell there who will have been delivered.* <10> *And the redeemed of the Lord will return, and will dwell on Sion with praise, and everlasting joy will be upon their heads: they will obtain joy and gladness, and their sorrow and mourning shall flee away, says the Lord omnipotent* [Is. 35 9-10].

[120-121] What happiness we will live in with our Lord Jesus Christ, surpassing [all], to whom [there is] glory for ever and ever, amen.