

Mary Mother of God

(Tomorrow) Today we celebrate Mother's day, obviously not the secular holiday in which we honor our birth mothers; but we celebrate our spiritual mother, the mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is fitting that we celebrate this solemnity of Mary, because without her we wouldn't have celebrated December 25, there would not have been a Christmas. We give thanks to God for Mary because of her crucial role in the Incarnation. In my Christmas homily, I talked about the joy of having a savior. We would not have a savior, nor the joy that comes with that, without Mary first giving birth to him. Today presents us with a different element of that same joy and why it remains, always available to us.

This solemnity was moved to the eighth day of Christmas in the 1969 revision of the liturgical calendar, but the Church has always recognized Mary as the mother of God, and has celebrated this feast at different times throughout history. But by celebrating it on January 1 we recognize Mary while at the same time conclude the octave of Christmas, the eighth day of Christmas. The two go hand in hand, Christmas and Mary; for Mary brought the Son of God into the world, bearing the Son of God in her womb. This reality is so vital to our faith and is why the Church has adamantly defended the teaching of Mary as the mother of God.

Going back to the 400's, the Council of Ephesus corrected the heretic Nestorius, who limited the dignity of Mary. In his mind, Christ wasn't perfectly or fully God, so Mary didn't truly give birth to God. Thus, Nestorius wanted to use the term *Christotokos* in reference to Mary, meaning Christ bearer, because he didn't think Mary truly gave birth to God. But if Mary didn't actually give birth to God, then Christ isn't truly God. And if Christ isn't fully God then our Catholic faith is a waste. To correct this, the Council of Ephesus used the term *Theotokos*

instead of *Christotokos*...Theo meaning God and tokos meaning bearer, thus God-bearer. This title then affirms the fact that Mary is truly the mother of God because Jesus is God.

There is more here than just historical significance though, Mary as the mother of God has immediate significance for all of us, here and now...because Jesus is significant to us, here and now. As John Paul II pointed out, Mary as the Mother of God is not “just a question of the Virgin Mother's life-story, (or) her personal journey of faith...it is also a question...of all those who take part in this same "pilgrimage of faith.” We are all pilgrims on earth, journeying in faith to our eternal destination. And we are on pilgrimage through life, united together, because we are sons and daughters of God, making our way to Him. We have the remarkable privilege of being real children of God, because Jesus became our brother thanks to the motherhood of Mary.

As St. Paul points out in his letter to the Galatians, we are slaves no longer, not to ourselves nor to the world, but we are now adopted children of God. We are sons and daughters of God through our baptism in Christ. We might be tempted to think that this is just pie in the sky, theological fluff or terminology; but that couldn't be further from the truth. The significance of a child having a parent cannot be understated. Children rely on their parents for everything, safety, nourishment, education, and faith. Besides dependency, children long for the love of their parents and want to know that they are loved, that their parents affirm their very existence. We are like any child that longs for a parent...and God is now our Father and Mary our mother.

Being a child of God is part of the foundation of our faith and provides us with a Catholic confidence so to speak. We can be confident in our faith because we have a God who loves us to the point of adoption. Just as a child is reassured by the love of his parents, we too are reassured by God's love. This love provides us with the confidence to live out our faith no matter what

comes our way. This confidence comes from the fact that God delights in you, He affirms your existence, and desires your growth in holiness. He wants us to be saved, to enjoy eternal happiness with Him. It is for this reason that He sent His Son, born of a woman, so that we might be true children of His. So being children of God is not just significant, it is absolutely necessary. And it's why we praise and honor Mary as our mother, since it's because she was to become our mother, that we have God as our Father.

Besides humbly bringing our Lord into this world, Mary is the new mother of all humanity. If Jesus our Lord is our brother, then Mary is our mother as well. And indeed we know this to be the case because Jesus Himself entrusted us to Mary as our Mother when on the cross He looked at Mary and said, "woman behold your son" and looking at St. John said, "behold your mother." Having the Mother of God as our own mother provides us with everything we could need or want from a mother. She watches over us just as any loving and faithful mother does for her child. She offers us more love than we could handle...no doubt a cause for joy.

The more we embrace and identify Mary as our mother, the closer we will become to her son Jesus...our Lord and brother. And if a brother or sister to Christ, then we'll see ourselves as we truly are...children of a loving God. This my friends does not end with the octave of Christmas, just as a parent doesn't stop being a parent. So the joy I speak of remains, because the truth of our identity remains.