

One of the trite anti-Catholic diatribes is that Catholic worship Mary. You probably heard this if you were ever part of a Christian men's or women's group, or a college Christian ministry of some sort. Or perhaps you had to explain to your son and daughter that something the teacher or principal said about Catholics and Mary was incorrect. Over the years as I hear Catholics complain about these situations, I wish I could say to those people telling us Catholics what we believe, "Oh please, Mr and Mrs Bigot. Can you try to be a bit more original? Why don't you throw in that Catholics never open a bible or have scripture as part of their worship? How about saying that the papal army is planning to conquer the United States? That Swiss Guard must be mighty dangerous in spite of their pretty uniforms." The bigots that we all deal with are just plain silly. Of course we don't worship Mary. We worship God in His Infinite Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we pray to Mary, we ask her to intercede with her Son for us. Because no created being is closer to Jesus than her.

Our belief in the special reverence due to Mary goes back to the earliest days of the Church, in fact, even before the Church became Church on Pentecost. It was on Calvary that Jesus gave mankind to his mother through the disciple John. When the early councils of the Church groped with the formulation of the dogmas on the divinity of Jesus, the statements of what our faith teaches about Jesus, they distinguished who Jesus is from what Jesus is.

Who is Jesus? He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Eternal Word of the Father. What is Jesus? He is Divine in nature for all eternity, and human in nature from the moment of the incarnation within Mary.

But what about Mary? How is she the Mother of God? A woman is a person's natural mother if she carried him in her womb and if she gave him half of his genetic matter. Mary was the mother of Jesus in both of these senses; because she carried Jesus in her womb and supplied the genetic matter for his human body. Obviously, she is not his mother in the sense that she is older than God or the source of her Son's divinity. She is the Mother of God in the sense that she carried in her womb a divine person, Jesus Christ, God "in the flesh"

OK, so that's the theology behind today's feast, but what is that saying to us today? It is telling us that Mary was and is a woman like no other. She was not just an obedient teenager. She was not just a concerned mother. She was not just a faith filled but grief stricken mother watching her son die on the cross. She was all this and so much more. She was part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind. She carried within her the One who created her. There is great truth in our nativity scenes that depict Mary worshiping the child whom she had just borne. Her child is the Son of God.

Mary is the first woman of the New Age. She is the New Eve, the new mother of all those living in the Kingdom of God. She is our mother, given to us on the cross, yes, but also given to us for all time in the unfathomable plan of God for our salvation.

When we were little we asked our mothers to fulfill our needs. When we needed to eat, we cried, or, a bit older, we said, "Mom, I'm hungry." As we got older we had new and more complicated needs, but we knew we could bring them to our mothers. Many times she interceded with our fathers for us. We pray to Mary to fill our needs. We trust her to go to our Father to obtain grace for us.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary is a fundamental aspect of Christianity. She is both our mother and the Mother of God. That is why the Hail Mary concludes with:

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen*