

Commentary for the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God: Mary, Mother of Faith



A while back I had a discussion with a young man about Jesus. The young man was seriously searching and needed to be respected for where he was in his journey in faith. He told me that although he called himself a Christian, he did not believe that Christ was God. He said that he believed that Jesus was just a great man. I asked him how being a follower of Christ for him would be any different from being a follower of Marx, or of Ghandi, or of Martin Luther King or any other figure from history. He left pondering an answer to this question because he knew that he recognized Jesus as far more than a historical figure.

The whole question of whom Jesus is as well as the importance of understanding His divinity gave rise to the great theological statement that He is the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary. His nature, what He is, is both God and man. His person, who He is, is the Eternal Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. He has only one Person, one Who. Therefore, the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 449, Mary, although herself a human being, is also the Mother of God. Through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, Mary conceived within herself the second person of the Holy Trinity. And so we pray, “Holy Mary, Mother of God,” and we celebrate this today, the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

At Christmastime we sing beautiful carols and even lullabies that put us emotionally back into Bethlehem. Babies are to be cherished and loved and cared for and all those good things that bring out the parental juices in all of us. So we spend time contemplating Jesus as a baby. At the same time, though, the Church reminds us who this Jesus is. Jesus is the Pre-existent Word of God. He is the Lord and the Messiah. He is the Savior who is fully God and fully human. This is all a mystery, how Jesus could be fully God and fully human; but it is faith that we profess, not a system of scientifically proven facts. We are reminded today that the One whose birth we romanticize with Silent Night is the One who was present at the creation of the universe.

Mary pondered all this within her heart, scripture tells us. She, obviously, knew about the mysterious conception of the child nine months earlier. She continually reflected on the events of Jesus' birth. Normally a baby boy was received into his home with a festival of musical instruments played by the people of the neighborhood. Jesus was received with the songs of an Angelic choir. Normally a boy was given the name of a relative. Jesus was given the name, Yahweh Saves. When many years later, after Pentecost, the apostles proclaimed, "This Jesus whom you have put to death is in fact Lord, Messiah and Savior," Mary had to remember that the shepherds appeared that holy night carrying the message of the angels, "To, you, this day is born in the City of David a Savior who is Messiah and Lord."

Mary was a woman of faith, complete faith. She had faith that somehow God would care for her in her pregnancy, in the childbirth, throughout her life, and at the foot of the cross. She had faith that His plan was working through this wonderful child of the common life. She had faith that she was changing the diapers of the Son of God.

On this, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, we pray for faith, real faith, not faith that demands proofs and is therefore a very weak faith, but faith that God is working His plans in and through us in mysterious ways. We pray today for the Gift of the Holy Spirit called understanding. The gift of understanding helps us realize that God is far greater than our intelligence can comprehend. This gift leads us to take the step of faith that proclaim along with Mary that the child of Bethlehem is the Son of God.

All of us have doubts in faith. They are part of human life. The very apostles who witnessed the resurrection of the Lord had doubts of faith even while they stood on the Mountain of the Ascension (Matthew 28:17). Faith demands our taking a step away from our human perspective and trusting in God to do the incomprehensible.

Today we pray to Mary, the Mother of God. We ask her to petition her son for us so that we also might have the courage, the humility, and the faith to proclaim with the Church that Jesus is Lord.

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