

Mary, Mother of God 2021

Luke 2:16-21

From this Gospel came centuries of fierce debates, heated arguments, counter excommunications, and several councils just to sort out the Jesus' Incarnation lasting into the 5th century. Mary's role in the whole matter was that she was simply the mother of God.

Distinctly put, could the human Mary give birth to the God-man Jesus Christ, or could a human give birth to a God? When one states it that way it seems obvious, No! But then God can do anything, (even though that was not part of the official statement at the councils).

Fortunately for us, all that is behind us, since the early Church argued itself out...or has it? Can the human Mary give birth to the God-Man Jesus Christ? Does it matter? Does it make a difference? Does it even concern us? It mattered to the Romans, or at least to their heroes and their emperors, since they considered them gods after death. A few emperors declared themselves gods even during their lifetimes, even though that didn't keep them from dying. I guess it all depends on what we mean by being like God.

Most important, it matters to the Church, since most heresies are Christological and both sides quote Scripture to support their views and beliefs.

For example, Jesus was born a human, and then became God. How? By adoption, was one belief put forth by Apollinaris. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (Sounds good to me.) This is a common Christology that starts with Jesus' incarnation and then works out his divinity. Eventually, Apollinaris' adoption belief was condemned.

"In the beginning was the word (logos) and the word became flesh," from John's Gospel. (That sounds pretty good also.) This Christology starts with Christ's divinity and then works out his humanity. Unfortunately, Cyril of Alexandria stated that the humanity of Jesus included a human soul, but the human knowledge and freedom of Jesus have no theological significance.

Both approaches remain significant in today's approach to the person of Christ, and both have implications for Mariology. Can Mary be called "Mother

of God?" One title was "Theotokos" which is still used by the Greek Orthodox Church but was avoided by the West because of its misunderstanding with the pagan goddesses. Pope Celestine settled the debate and sided with the title, "Mother of God."

Some would say "Much ado about nothing!" but does it really matter? I believe it does, since through baptism we are slowly becoming divinized in Christ. We are slowly, through the work of the Holy Spirit, becoming like God. The first step is that through our baptism where we will live forever with God in the next life. What that will look like, we do not know, but we do have a few ideas, from Christ after his resurrection. "Do you have any fish to eat, so that you may know I am not a ghost!"

According to modern biology, Mary is more closely related to Jesus than in the older view. Through her, and through her alone, Jesus becomes heir of the lineage of inheritance which leads back to the origin of the human family. This is significant in Luke's genealogy.

The psychological dependence of the child on the mother leads to the psychological bond, the intimate communion between mother and child. The mother bears the child nine months during pregnancy gives birth to him, nourishes his body with her breasts and protects him during the years of utter dependence. Each of these relationships affects the child deeply—it also affects the life of the mother most intimately.

Psychology reveals the deep impact this earliest relationship has on the entire personality of the child. As recounted by the Gospels, the human personality of Jesus developed in Nazareth under the care of his mother. We may think of Jesus as a happy child, accepted and loved by his mother, closely linked to her in the daily life in the rural setting of a village.

The natural link between mother and child develops into a personal relationship in tune with the natural growth of the child, beginning with the total dependence of the child on the mother and leading to the mature independence of the young person. The personal relationship passes through the constant tension between continued dependence and growing self-asserting freedom. Every mother has to face the painful task of allowing her children to grow and find their own destiny. A possessive mother who links the child to herself may ruin his life. To allow freedom is the test of real love.

Theologically Mariology begins only with Mary's personal relationship to Jesus. By God's design she is drawn into his life not only through her physical motherhood but also by sharing his life and saving mission. She has to follow his path in the darkness of faith. In the angelic message he is described as Messiah and Savior; she must accept him with his mission which seems to take him away from her, but which links her in reality inseparably with its saving work.

Through her obedience to the divine message, Mary shares in Jesus' work of salvation.

According to Saint Augustine,

"It is more important that Mary is Christ's **disciple** than that she is his mother...Mary is blessed because she listened to God's word and kept it. More important is that she conceived his truth **in her mind** than his flesh in her womb."