

The Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God January 1, 2021

Ask anyone who has become Catholic what the biggest obstacle to their conversion was, and most will tell you that it was Mary. Many of our Protestant friends find it hard to accept why Mary has such a central role in our Catholic faith. They wonder why we celebrate her with such titles as “Mother of God”. Many of them fear that our devotion to Mary takes away from the worship that is only due to God.

Our answer is simple. We give such a central role to Mary because God gave her such a central role. She alone was chosen to be the mother of Jesus. It was her “yes” that allowed Jesus to be conceived within her. Because of her, our Messiah and Lord was born to the world. We rightly call her “Mother of God” because she is the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We love Mary because Jesus first loved her. He entrusted Himself fully and completely to her. Like all infants, he was frail and helpless. He couldn't do anything for Himself. He relied on Mary to feed Him, to bath Him, and to soothe Him. Jesus loved Mary with a son's love. And He calls us to do the same.

On the cross, Jesus pointed Mary out to His disciple, John, saying, “Behold your mother.” We believe that, in so doing, Jesus was giving Mary not only to John but to all believers. Just as the child Jesus entrusted Himself into her care, so He entrusts all of us into her loving care. Just as the child Jesus went to her with His every need, so He calls us to turn to her with our every need. Just as the child Jesus ran to her when He was sad or hurt, so Jesus calls us to run to her when we are suffering.

It is true that we can go straight to Jesus. But we could also say, “Why go to Jesus when I can go straight to the Father?” The fact is that, it is through Jesus that we reach the Father. In something of the same way - but not totally - we can reach Jesus through Mary. Mary is the one who brought Jesus into the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. She helps make our encounter with Jesus possible throughout history. She helps to make our encounter with Jesus today possible through her motherly care.

She does that through her constant prayer for us. She loves us as her dear children and is in Heaven interceding for us at every minute. Just as she encouraged Jesus to change water into wine at the Wedding Feast of Cana, she is encouraging Jesus to do miracles for us, to provide for our needs, and to give us everything we need to make it to Heaven.

By celebrating Mary under the title of “Mother of God”, we are acknowledging a simple fact - that she is the mother of Jesus who is God. By going to her with our concerns and asking for her prayers, we are also acknowledging a simple fact - that she

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cares for us with a mother's love. She has direct access to Jesus, her Son. Why wouldn't we want such a powerful intercessor on our side? Why wouldn't we take advantage of her prayers to aid us in our journey through life?

Mary's role is also a simple one - to bring people to love her son.

Today's gospel gives us a beautiful picture of Mary in the stable at Bethlehem. She is sitting there with Jesus in the manger as the shepherds come in to adore Him. They are amazed at what they see. We can just imagine Mary beaming with pride at the miracle of her Son's birth. It is her great joy to show Him off to the world. That has been Mary's attitude ever since. She wants us to see her son and fall in love with Him just as she has.

So why do we give Mary such a central role? Because God gave her a central role in our salvation. Why do we love Mary so much? Because Jesus loved her. Why do we turn to her for prayer and consolation? Because Jesus turned to her for prayer and consolation. Why do we look to her as an example of faith? Because she said "yes" to all that God asked of her just as we are called to do.

We begin this New Year with hopeful hearts. The Church calls us to make a new start today by entrusting ourselves to Mary's motherly care. She never let Jesus down, and she will never let us down either.

St Maximilian Kolbe once said, "Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did." Following Jesus' example, then, let us begin this new year by loving the Mother of God, turning to her in our need, entrusting ourselves to her motherly care, and following her one commandment - "Do whatever He tells you."