

Mary, Mother of God
A Mid-week Advent Sermon

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

What is confessed in tonight's sermon is quite simple, yet profound.

It begins by confessing and acknowledging that Jesus is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true Man. You cannot separate the two natures of the Christ—Jesus is one person, God and man—but you can confess each nature separately.

Jesus is true Man, of that there is no doubt. These past few weeks, Jesus' human nature has been stressed, perhaps to the neglect of His divine nature. Jesus has a human name, given to Him by His guardian and mother. He has a human frame, assumed in the womb of His mother. He was conceived, born, and grew just like you. He ate and drank, laughed and cried, ran and walk, slept at night, learned the Ten Commandments, prayed the Psalms—He did everything a normal man would do, except what a normal man after the fall does: sin.

But, Jesus is true God. As the angel announced to the virgin, that which was conceived in her would be called the Son of the Highest. Gabriel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her as the power of the Highest would overshadow her and she would conceive a Son. And because of all of that, the Son she would conceive and bear would be called the Son of God.

Jesus is true God. The Apostle St. John emphasizes Jesus' divinity often, though throughout His days on earth, He humbly kept it hidden. Several times in John's Gospel, Jesus refers to Himself as I AM, a name synonymous to the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush: YHWH. The phrase and God's name even sound similar in Hebrew. It was a claim to the divine on Jesus' part, and for it, He was nearly stoned a few times.

Jesus is true God, as evidenced by the opening chapter of St. John's Gospel. The Word was in the beginning. He was there, eternally—without beginning or end. He was there with God, and He was God. Then, at just the right time, the Word became flesh. (cf. John 1:1-14) Jesus is God in the flesh, or as the prophet had foretold, God-With-Us: Immanuel. (cf. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)

Jesus is true God, as even Jesus Himself says. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus often used the title Son of Man when referring to Himself. Now, as ironic as it sounds, the title actually emphasizes His divinity. On the one hand, while it indicates that Jesus is fully man, it shows Him to be so much more, because it combines the ideas of a servant who will suffer and die for all people, as Isaiah mentions (cf. Isaiah 53), as well as His exaltation when Daniel used the term when he spoke of his night vision in which he saw "one like a son of man [coming] to the Ancient of Days [being] presented before him." To this "son of man" was "given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him." (cf. Daniel 7:13-14) It was others, most notably the centurion who witnessed the crucifixion and death of Jesus, who referred to Him as the Son of God. (cf. Matthew 27:54)

Jesus is true God, and He confesses as much. As He calls Himself the Good Shepherd, He reveals that no one is able to snatch His sheep out of His hand. His Father has given them to Him, and no one can take them away from Him. The Father is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. Then, almost peculiarly, Jesus says, "I and My Father are one." (cf. John 10:27-30) No one is able to snatch the sheep out of Jesus' hand because no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand because Jesus and the Father are one—they are the same, they are of the same substance, they are divine.

Jesus is true God, and the rest of the Scriptures attest to this as well. For instance, there is the beautiful line in the letter to the Hebrews which proclaims of Jesus that He is the same yesterday,

today, and forever. (cf. Hebrews 13:8) That is not something you can say of a man, and it may even sound strange because the Word of God's time as Jesus—as a man—has a very definite beginning: about nine months before a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered, while Quirinius was governor of Syria. (cf. Luke 2:1-2) However, you can say that of Jesus because He is God, even in His humanity.

So, this is the simplicity of the confession in tonight's sermon: If Jesus is true God, and Mary is the mother of Jesus, then Mary is the mother of God. Many balk at such a confession because it is difficult for fallen minds to fully comprehend such a statement. And, in fact, fallen logic dictates that a mere mortal cannot be the mother of divinity. However, the logic is simple, as profound as it sounds: Jesus is God, and Mary is the mother of Jesus; therefore Mary is the mother of God.

Still, there are some who rightly have a hard time with that because they fear ascribing too much honor to the virgin. That fear is unfounded, even as you heard in the Gospel lesson from this past Sunday. (cf. Luke 1:39-56) There, as Mary makes her way with haste to visit Elizabeth and greets her, John the Baptist leaps for joy in Elizabeth's womb, and the older woman says of Mary, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" She even calls Mary the "mother of my Lord." Then, Mary sings her song, in which she declares, "[H]enceforth all generations will call me blessed."

So, fear not, dear hearers, to honor the maiden from Nazareth, moreso than other women. She is blessed because of the fruit of her womb, your Lord and Savior. She bore for you the Word of God in the flesh, in order that He would give that flesh over to death in your stead, that you may live forever in His kingdom. He is your Lord. He is your Savior. He is your Redeemer. He is your God. And Mary is His mother, so she is the mother of your Lord, the mother of God. She is the only woman granted to bear the Savior, to bear God, because He will not come again in that fashion. Therefore, do not be afraid to call her blessed, the mother of your Lord, or the mother of God—the Scriptures confess as much of Mary.

Furthermore, when you confess Mary to be the Mother of God, you make confession of the faith with the Church catholic—that is, you confess the historic and biblical faith that the Church has confessed for all time. It was at the council of Ephesus in AD431 that Mary was ultimately declared to be Θεοτόκος, a word which means Bearer of God or Mother of God. The council made that confession because there it was confessed that Jesus is both God and man over and against the heresy of Nestorianism, which taught that the human and divine natures were not united in the person of Jesus Christ.

You see, that's the flip side of such a confession. What you say of Mary reflects what it is you confess and believe as regards her Son, Jesus. If you joyfully and truthfully, with all dignity and piety, call Mary the Mother of God, then you confess Jesus, her Son, is God. If you refuse to call her the Mother of God, then your confession is that Jesus is not God. And if your confession is that Jesus is not God, then you call the Father and Jesus liars, as demonstrated by all the times that the Scriptures refer to the divinity of Jesus.

Ultimately, the confession that Jesus is not God which is made by a statement indicating that Mary is not the mother of God, is a confession that Jesus' saving work is insufficient to save. It is necessary for Jesus to be fully man and fully God. Simply put, Jesus had to be fully man in order to die for the sins of the world, and fully God in order to rise again from the dead in order to overcome death and the devil for humanity. This is the complete and entire salvific work completed by Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, for which without being fully man or fully God, would be insufficient to save you. So, if you do not confess Mary to be the mother of God, then you confess that Jesus' work of salvation isn't enough, and there has to be something more for you to do in order to be saved.

So here the corollary to tonight's simple confession: Just as simply, if Mary is not the Mother of God, then you are hopelessly lost and condemned. But, Mary is the Mother of God, because her Son is

fully God. Therefore, you are not lost and condemned, but won back from death to life by the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of Man and Son of God. You are baptized into Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, by which you are made heirs with Him of eternal life, children of God, as St. John the Evangelist wrote: "[A]s many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12)

Therefore, you can rejoice and be glad. The Mother of God has borne a Son for you. "[U]nto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) Because you are baptized into Jesus, the Son of Mary, you are made with Him a son God, because by Him, you are forgiven for all of your sins.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.