



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Why does Mary have a special role in helping us?

As the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary has a unique position among the saints, indeed, among all creatures. She is exalted, yet still one of us.

Redeemed by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth. At the same time, however, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all those who are to be saved.

Mary embraces God's will and freely chooses to cooperate with God's grace, thereby fulfilling a crucial role in God's plan of salvation. Throughout the centuries, the Church has turned to the Blessed Virgin in order to come closer to Christ. Many forms of piety toward the Mother of God developed that help bring us closer to her Son. In these devotions to Mary, "while the Mother is honored, the Son, through whom all things have their being and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, is rightly known, loved and glorified and . . . all His commands are observed." The Church honors her as the Mother of God, looks to her as a model of perfect discipleship, and asks for her prayers to God on our behalf.

How does our veneration of Mary and the saints relate to our worship of God?

The honor we give to God alone is properly called adoration, the highest honor we can give. The honor we give to Mary and the saints is called veneration. Proper veneration of the saints does not interfere with the worship due to God, but rather fosters it. "Our communion with those in heaven, provided that it is understood in the fuller light of faith according to its genuine nature, in no way weakens, but conversely, more thoroughly enriches the worship we give to God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit." With this understanding, we see that proper veneration of Mary does not detract from worship of God. Even as the Mother of the Savior, Mary has a place that is in every way subordinate to and dependent upon that of her Son, who is the one mediator between God and humanity. The maternal role that Mary fulfills for us as Mother of the Church "in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power."

The Second Vatican Council explained very clearly that Mary can be said to fulfill a mediating role only in a secondary and derivative manner:

For no creature could ever be counted as equal with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer. Just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by the ministers and by the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is really communicated in different ways to His creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.

What Mary does for the salvation of the human family does not come from her own power, but from a gift of divine grace that is bestowed on her through her Son. All the salvific influence that she bestows on us is produced "not from some inner necessity, but from the divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it."³⁸ Mary in no way replaces Christ. Rather, her role is to bring us to Christ, as is illustrated in Mary's admonition at the wedding feast of Cana, "Do whatever he tells you." (Jn 2:5)

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