

Singing Mary's Praises: I have been asked, many times, over the years, to explain some of the Catholic teachings about the Virgin Mary and her place in the life of the Church. These types of questions are fairly common, especially in the South. At times, the person who asks such a question has been misinformed about the Church's view of Mary in the history of salvation. As we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, this is an opportune time to review some traditional Catholic teachings regarding the Blessed Mother.

The calendar year begins with the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. The Greek title is *Theotokos* which means: The God-bearer. Mary is the Mother of God because she is the mother of Jesus who is the 2nd person of the Blessed Trinity. The term 'Mother of God' affirms the divinity of Christ and our belief in the Incarnation. God the Father sent the Son to be born in time to redeem us. Jesus is one person, although He has two natures – human and divine.

Some believe that Mary gave birth to other children as the Gospels refer to Jesus' brothers and sisters (for example, see Mt. 13:55-56). The Catholic Church has consistently taught that Mary had no other children. The word used in Scripture for the brothers and sisters of our Lord may be interpreted as cousins or other relatives. The Catechism teaches: Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, always a virgin" (St. Augustine, *Serm.* 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is "the handmaid of the Lord" (*Lk* 1:38). [# 510]

On December 8th, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This defined teaching states that the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved from the stain original sin from the first moment of her conception by a singular grace and the privilege of Almighty God in light of the foreseen merits of her Son, our eternal Lord and Redeemer. The Archangel Gabriel recognized Mary as "full of grace" and as "one with the Lord." [See *Lk.* 1] Mary had been chosen to be the Mother of our Savior. St. Gabriel said to her, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. [*Lk.* 1:31] Through her cooperation in the divine plan, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." [*Jn.* 1:14] The United States of America has been formally dedicated to Our Blessed Lady under her title of the Immaculate Conception.

We believe that Christ is our Savior. We profess our faith in the redemption that He won for us on Calvary. We are joyful in knowing that through His resurrection, He opened for us the gates of Heaven. Mary intercedes for us to her Son. From the cross, Jesus entrusted Mary to the Beloved Disciple [*Jn.* 19:26-27]. We are called to be the beloved disciples of today.

August 15 is the date of the celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which we recognize as the 4th Glorious Mystery of the Holy Rosary. We believe that God's Revelation to His people is through both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. We also believe in the ministry of the Holy Father with regard to official teachings. Addressing a jubilant crowd of more than 500,000 packed into St. Peter's Square, Pope Pius XII solemnly defined in *Munificentissimus Deus* on Nov. 1, 1950, that the "Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." This is an official teaching of the Church.

The Feast of the Assumption gives each of us great hope. Mary moves us by example and prayer to grow in God's grace, to be receptive to His will, to convert our lives through sacrifice and penance, and seek that everlasting union in the heavenly Kingdom. Let us follow Mary's example. Our eternal hope is to be in the presence of the Blessed Trinity, the Blessed Mother, and the Communion of Saints with the choir of angels. While the Assumption of Mary is not a Holy Day of Obligation as it lands on a Monday this year, the Solemnity remains. We will have two Masses here on Monday: 9 am and 12:10 pm.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

In peace, *Fr. Mark*

