

## Ask Fr. James

### How is Mary the Mother of God?

In the Hail Mary prayer, we call her: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners..." on January 1st, we celebrate the feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of God.. and from verses in the scripture, we composed prayers seeking her intercession and we also pray the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and we most often make pilgrimages to Marian shrines and pray the rosary. We do all these because She is mother of God's son who is truly man and truly God and Jesus himself, from on top of the cross, handed us over, entrusted us, consecrated us, and placed us in her hands, saying "Behold, your mother" (John 19:22-27).

Since that very day, the disciples of Jesus and the earliest Christian communities began the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We know of some Marian hymns that were composed in those early centuries of Christianity. Scriptural evidences abound showing that God chose her and predestined her to be the Mother of the second person of the Trinity by Divine Graciousness. However, there are some people who still question Mary as Mother of God, they would rather prefer she was called Mother of the Man-Jesus. According to them;

1. This title exalted Mary to a status either equal or superior to her Son, Jesus Christ and
2. Second, that Mary would be viewed as divine herself while she is only a human being

This controversy is not new. It was already raging in the early history of the church when theologians and church members became divided into two schools of thought because of this title for the Blessed virgin Mary. The one school was called the Antiochenes (Christians whose headquarters were in Antioch or Constantinople) and they typically focused on Christ's humanity, describing Mary merely as the mother of the man-Jesus and the other school, the Alexandrian (Christians with headquarters in Alexandria, Egypt), focused on His divinity, describing Mary as the Mother of God.

The leader of the Antiochene school, Nestorius rejected the designation of Mary as Mother of God (Theotokos) and suggested it be replaced with the title Mother of Christ (Christotokos) because, according to him, God could not dwell in a woman's womb. This led the Pope to calling a world ecumenical council of bishops to resolve the matter. Cyril, the energetic archbishop of Alexandria, a prominent exponent of the Alexandrian school of theology, explained the two natures of Jesus Christ united in the person of the Word and gave the precise affirmation of the divine motherhood. All the bishops that attended this council of Ephesus saw the inspiration in the theological explanation and confessed the name of "Theotokos" (God-bearer) to Mary and it stays till today and forever.

This Council and the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople and Chalcedon would later produce versions of Nicene Creed that clarified biblically, that there was evidence that Jesus is truly God. They drew inspiration from the angel addressing Mary at the Annunciation: "*And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High...*" (Luke 1:35). Thus following scriptural evidence, the Nicene Creed says: "Jesus was conceived by of the Holy Spirit, born of the blessed virgin Mary and was made man for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man ..." This is why we profess in our faith that Jesus is **true God and true man**.