

Please, explain the Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

In the 4th century, there was a controversy among some Catholics led by a bishop called Nestorius and it began with a disagreement regarding the propriety of calling Mary a God-bearer (*Theotokos*) or *mother of God*. Their reason was the fear first, that an inappropriate exaltation of Mary to the status of Mother of God could confuse people who would think she is equal or superior to her Son and second, that Mary would be viewed as divine herself. These concerns led some people to reject the designation of *Theotokos* (God-Bearer) for Mary and replaced it with the title *Christotokos*, (Christ-Bearer) Mother of Christ. However, in 431 A.D. at the Council of Ephesus chaired by St. Cyril, it was clarified that Mary is both the mother of the person of Jesus Christ, who is both fully divine and fully human and that Mary is the Mother of God, who carried Christ in her womb. The Bible verse that was quoted was:

The angel of the Lord comes to Mary and greets her saying, “Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you,” and Mary “was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be”... The angel Gabriel then said to Mary, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. And you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High” (Luke. 1:28-32).

The church believes that Mary was simply destined from the beginning to be the Mother of God. The foundational principle behind this feast of Mary lies in her Divine Maternity - She is the *Theotokos* or the Mother of God. On January 1st every year, the church invites all Catholics to contemplate the Hail Mary text and prayer as espoused in scripture - the words that the angel spoke to her at the annunciation, especially the part that emphasize her status as the Mother of God -Blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus and Blessed are you amongst women...

This feast calls us to re-conceptualize Mary's womb as the dwelling place of the divine infant. The singing of the *Ave Maria* or Hail Mary is encouraged in the liturgy of this feast day to help us think of Mary as the 'glorious temple of God; to contemplate Mary as an abode (tabernacle) of Christ and pray along, longing to receive the honour of imitating Mary as the dwelling of Christ. When we

conceptualize Mary's womb as the tabernacle that housed Jesus, we, by frequently partaking of the Eucharist, become, like Mary, the vessel wherein the Incarnation occurs and tabernacles which houses the Eucharist.