

MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS

In the Book of the Apocalypse, we read of the vision of "the woman clothed in the sun and with the moon at her feet". The woman is about to give birth to a child and a great dragon is waiting to devour it. Frustrated in the attempts to overcome the mother and child, "the dragon went elsewhere to make war on the rest of her children, the men who keep God's commandments and hold fast to the truth concerning Jesus". (Apoc. 12).

Christian tradition has seen in this "woman" a reference to Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is also the mother of his followers.

Mary's spiritual motherhood of all people is one of the most ancient of Christian traditions; for Mary gave birth to Jesus not as a private person but as our saviour and head. Even within Mary's virginal womb, Christ our saviour bore the exalted title of head of the Church. "The conception of Christ is the beginning of the Christian people and the birth of the Head is the birth of the Body". (St. Leo the Great)

Through baptism, we have been united with Christ to share with him his life and glory; we have become brothers and sisters of Christ, adopted children of the same Father in heaven. And Mary is the spiritual mother of Christ's brothers and sisters by grace just as surely as she is the physical mother of Christ.

"Christ is not in the head nor in the body but the whole Christ is in both head and body together". (St. Augustine) And Mary is the mother of the whole Christ. "She is the mother of the members of Christ ... having co-operated by a positive act of love in the birth of the faithful in the Church, who are the members of that head". (St. Augustine)

Since Mary is our mother, she has all of a mother's intense love and interest for us. We may go to her with confidence - confiding to her our interests, laying before her our sorrows and difficulties, having recourse to her in all our needs and temptations.

There are many people who regularly ask for our Lady's assistance for the grace of a good confession, for spiritual advancement, for peace in the home, for conversion of sinners, for financial assistance, for a Catholic partner in life, for better health, for daily needs both spiritual and temporal.

But remember: Mary does not operate independently of God. Mary will only ask God for what is God's will for us. And her constant reply to us will be the one she gave to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana: "Do whatever he tells you". (John 2, 5.)

Catholics say to one another, "Pray for me," because they know that all the members of the Body of Christ help one another. They ask the saints in heaven to pray for them, because these are close to God and their prayers are powerful. But there is no member of the Church closer and dearer to Christ than Mary.

She is far superior to all the angels and saints. Hence the Church pays her unique honour, but always short of adoration which is due to God alone, After the Lord's prayer and the Creed, there is no better prayer than the "Hail Mary." Millions at all times of the day, in all parts of the world say it. It is made up of the words of the angel Gabriel and of Elizabeth to Mary, to which is added the petition of the Church.

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen"