

The Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 19, 2019

“We must recognize that, at first sight, the Gospels offer scant information on the person and life of Mary. We would certainly like to have had fuller information about her, which would have enabled us to know the Mother of God better.”
(Pope Saint John Paul II, General Audience of November 8, 1995)

As we continue our May series on Mary the Mother of God, let us address this question: “Since very little was ever written concerning Mary in the Bible, where do our beliefs concerning her and her mission come from?” We believe the Holy Spirit guided the early Christian community to develop a basic understanding of Mary, her role and mission. Over centuries various holy persons and theologians, still guided by the Holy Spirit, would further develop these beliefs. The dogmas we profess as a church today are a result of centuries of prayer, study, and reflection. We must remember the main focus of the Bible concerns God revealing Himself to humanity and our eternal salvation. Therefore, if we were just to accept what the Bible says concerning Mary (or many other subjects) without further thought, then we would not have the beautiful understanding of Mary that we now possess.

One of these many beautiful beliefs concerns the Motherhood of Mary. Last Sunday we honored all of our mothers as we celebrated Mother’s Day. The Bible recognizes motherhood as a *Gift* given to women from God. There are stories in both the Old and New Testaments of God divinely acting to bless a woman with the gift of motherhood. Sarah, Hannah, and Elizabeth were some of the holy women who were blessed by God. Each of these were barren, a mark of shame, until God chose to intercede. From early times, our ancestors would believe: “If God could bless these barren women with motherhood, then could He not also bless a virgin with that same gift?” If God could make the deaf hear, the dumb speak, turn water into wine, then why could He not bless the Virgin Mary with the gift of being the Mother of His Son? For the early church, to deny this would open the doors for denial of many other miraculous interactions between God and humanity. They also used the Annunciation narrative in Saint Luke’s Gospel to further strengthen their belief that Mary is the Virgin Mother of God.

The title we honor Mary with, Mother of God, is not a title that we easily came to understand. Our early Catholic ancestors debated fiercely with others, those who held heretical beliefs, concerning this understanding. Thankfully, they prevailed because this title not only shows respect to Mary, but it helps us to see motherhood in a beautiful way. We believe Mary shared, through her motherhood, much in the ministry of Jesus. She would have a united role in His work of salvation for she was the first to train her son in the ways of faith. Yes, Jesus is fully God and is the perfection of faith, hope, and love. However, He is also fully human and would need to learn these virtues by the witness and example of those around Him, i.e. His Mother. Mary played a vital role in our redemption and salvation; more than just saying “Yes” to being Jesus’ mother. As every mother has a guiding hand in the development of her child, so too Mary was that guiding hand for the child Jesus. We honor Mary the Mother of God who willingly accepted this mission to be His mother, and who now is our mother offering that same loving guidance she daily offered to her Son. Mary, Mother of Jesus and my mother, pray for me and guide me to be more like your Son in every way.