

***Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
Septuagesima (Latin Mass, defined below)  
Ninth Sunday before Easter, Third Sunday before Lent  
February 5, 2023  
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant***

*“The development, desire by us, of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is an indication of the Church’s genuine piety. This devotion fits – as we have indicated above – into the only worship that is rightly called ‘Christian,’ because it takes its origin and effectiveness from Christ, finds its complete expression in Christ, and leads through Christ in the Spirit to the Father.” (Pope Paul VI, For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, p.4)*

Let me begin this reflection with a simple statement that must be reinforced, the Catholic Church’s teaching concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, began as a response to questions concerning her Son, Jesus. With this in mind, I begin with a question: “Were the first Christians of Jewish descent?” An unmistakable “Yes” would be our answer to this question. Due to this one very important fact, early Christianity would rely heavily upon its Jewish ancestral roots in all things. The way they lived was a mixture of Judeo-Christian worship as recounted by Saint Luke in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles – “*And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart.*” (Acts 2:46). This is also very important for they would continue to read, reflect upon and teach using those books in the Bible which form our Old Testament. The reason for this, they saw in their own salvation history (Old Testament history) statements of God, through the voices of the Patriarchs and Prophets, which would prefigure the coming of and redemption through the Messiah, whom they believed had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It is between the years 100-150AD that we will focus upon today. It was during this time, a philosopher/layman arose who would record one of the first connections made between Jewish and Christian theology which would focus upon the role/action of the Blessed Virgin Mary concerning our salvation. That philosopher’s name – Saint Justin the Martyr and Apologist.

In his work, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Saint Justin wrote of the Christian belief connecting Eve and Mary. This parallel, stressing that which we have previously stated, actually began from two verses in the writings of Saint Paul concerning Jesus. “*For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead? And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.*” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Early Christians would make a connection between the first disobedient man, Adam, and the perfectly obedient Man, Jesus. They also knew that Adam was not alone in his disobedience of God. His help-mate, Eve would also be a part of this initial disobedience which ushered death into the world. The interesting part centers upon one line from the Book of Genesis: “*And Adam called the name of his wife Eve: because **she was the mother of all the living.***” (Genesis 3:20).

Although they had been taught that Eve was given her name because she was a Virgin who would become the “Mother of the Living,” the idea arose that as Jesus was the new Adam, “Father of the living,” so too there must be a new Eve, a new Virgin, herself becoming the true “Mother of the Living.” This role could only be filled by one person. The one person whose “Fiat,” whose “Yes” would undo the implicit “No” found in the actions of Eve. This one person could only be the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

My dear people, although we may think this a small point, a small connection, this was a monumental first statement concerning the role of Mary and how Christians would begin to honor her. Her “Yes” as Virgin and later Mother to co-operate in man’s salvation nullified the “No” of the first woman, virgin and later mother, Eve. As a woman was instrumental in mankind’s fall, so the Woman would be instrumental in mankind’s redemption. The statement of God, to both the serpent and Eve in the Garden, (Genesis 3:15 “*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.*”) would now find its fulfillment in Mary. Mary, the new Eve, would become the true Mother to all those living in accord with her Son, Jesus, the new Adam.