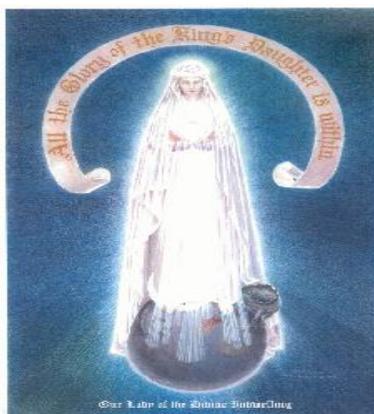


The Miraculous Conception and Virgin Birth of Jesus

The Divine Motherhood and Perpetual Virginity of Mary



Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God © 2009

Each Advent we reflect on the words of Isaiah, **“a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Emmanuel,”** and on the Annunciation account which tells us Mary has become a mother while remaining a virgin.

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, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” (New American Bible, Luke 1:26-36)

In our Creed we profess that the Virgin Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, which means miraculously. If Jesus was conceived in a miraculous way, it makes sense that He would be born in a miraculous way, too. Both events transcend the natural order of things. The **miraculous conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary** and the **miraculous birth of Jesus without impairment to the physical virginity of Mary** are two events that proclaim the simple Truth, **nothing is impossible to God**. These events are mysteries of our Faith and human reason cannot explain them.

The above passages form the basis of our Catholic dogmas on the Divine Motherhood of Mary and her Perpetual Virginity, dogmas defined in refuting heresies that denied either the full humanity of Jesus or His full divinity. Mary can only be understood in terms of her relationship to Jesus. As regards her Divine Motherhood...

Various names are used to describe Mary's role as mother of Jesus. She is called "Mother of God" which translates the more accurately stated "Theotokos" or Birthgiver of God. The Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.) attributed to Mary the title, Mother of God. This needs to be read against the Council's declaration that

in Christ there are two natures, one divine and one human, but only one person. Indeed, according to the Council the holy virgin is the Mother of God since she begot according to the flesh the Word of God made flesh. This normative decision was further explicated by the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) which says with regard to Mary's divine motherhood: *"...begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his godhead, and in the last days, ... because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as regards his manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten ..."*

As regards Mary's Perpetual Virginity we Catholics believe thus:

The expression perpetual virginity, ever-virgin, or simply "Mary the Virgin" refers primarily to the conception and birth of Jesus. From the first formulations of faith, ... the Church professed that Jesus Christ was conceived without human seed by the power of the Holy Spirit only. Here lies the decisive meaning of expressions such as "conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary," "Mary's virginal conception," or "virgin birth." ... Mary conceived "without any detriment to her virginity, which remained inviolate even after his birth" (Council of the Lateran, 649 A.D.)

... the Catholic Church holds as dogma that Mary was and is Virgin before, in and after Christ's birth. It stresses thus the radical novelty of the Incarnation and Mary's no less radical and exclusive dedication to her mission as mother of her Son, Jesus Christ. Vatican II reiterated the teaching about Mary, the Ever-Virgin, by stating that Christ's birth did not diminish Mary's virginal integrity but sanctified it. (LG 57) The Catechism of the Catholic Church... (CCC 499-507) also maintains that Jesus Christ was Mary's only child. The so-called "brothers and sisters" are close relations." Ref: <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/mariandogmas.html>

In her mystical visions on the life of Mary. Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich describes the birth of Jesus thus. After preparing the Cave of the Nativity for Jesus' birth, Joseph returns to the entrance and gazes at Mary, surrounded by flames that filled the whole cave with supernatural light. He gazed at her like Moses when he saw the burning bush. It was so overawing that he retired to his cell and fell on his face in prayer. Wondrous things took place around the world that night: idols were shattered, fountains of holy oil erupted, a vision of a virgin above a rainbow and a child rising up from her was seen. All creation was singing God's praises while Mary knelt, facing east, an ample robe spread around her.

At midnight she was wrapt in an ecstasy of prayer. I saw her lifted from the earth, so that I saw the ground beneath her. Her hands were crossed on her breast. The radiance about her increased; ... a pathway of light opened above Mary, rising with ever-increasing glory towards the height of Heaven. In this pathway of light there was a wonderful movement of glories interpenetrating each other, and, as they approached, appearing more clearly in the form of choirs of heavenly spirits. Meanwhile the Blessed Virgin, borne up in ecstasy, was now gazing downwards, adoring her God, whose Mother she had become and who lay on the earth before her in the form of a helpless newborn child. ... The Blessed Virgin remained for some time rapt in ecstasy. ... After some time I saw the Child Jesus move and heard Him cry. Then Mary seemed to come to herself, and she took the Child up from the carpet, wrapping Him in the cloth which covered Him, and held Him in her arms to her breast. ... It might have been an hour after His birth when Mary called St. Joseph, who was still lying in prayer. When he came near, he threw himself down on his face in devout joy and humility. It was only when Mary begged him to take to his heart, in joy and thankfulness, the holy present of the Most High God, that he stood up, took the Child Jesus in his arms, and praised God with tears of joy.

(Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, Tan Books, Charlotte NC, Pages 197-199.)

With the conception of Jesus in her womb, Mary had become quite literally the Ark of the New Covenant, not made of wood but of her own flesh, to carry, not merely the things of God but the very living God within her. The ark is a figure of our tabernacle. On November 22-23, 1957, Sister Mildred had a vision she said "is very important, for it reveals Our Lady as she really and truly was, **the Immaculate Tabernacle of the Indwelling God.**[®] She sees Our Lady with her right foot on a crescent moon and her left on the snout of an ugly dragon spewing fire from his jaw, which he could barely open because of Our Lady's foot. Our Lady was all in white and had a long transparent veil that covered the globe and was held on her head with a wreath of white roses. Stars seemed to sparkle in her hair. On her second visit she crossed her hands on her breast and bent her head slightly forward, eyes closed.

On her breast, as though through a veil, the Triangle and the Eye, which is often depicted as the symbol of the Divine Indwelling, could be visibly seen. ... It seemed that a strong beam of light streamed from the Divine Presence within Our Lady onto the globe at her feet. Then halfway around the figure of Our Lady above her head appeared a scroll on which were written in letters of gold the words: "All the glory of the King's daughter is within." Though it did not appear that her lips moved, yet I heard these words quite plainly: "I am Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him who dwells within." She seemed suffused in a soft glow of light that appeared to come from within her. It seemed to permeate and, as it were, saturate her whole being, even her apparel and the roses.

(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, The Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA[®], Fostoria, Ohio, Pgs. 22-23.)

On July 18, 1980, Our Lady gave Sister this important message regarding the Divine Indwelling, that sanctifying grace we receive in Baptism and literally hold in our hearts in Eucharistic Communion as the very Body of Christ in union with the Trinity.

The Presence of the trinity within every human being is the focal point, the basis of interior holiness. ... You must try to make my people understand that the life of God within them is the source of their peace and happiness. There is no other way. This is what my Son came to teach and bring and it was for this He lived and died. Unless this mystery of God's Presence within is accepted and lived, peace will not come. (The Diary, Pg. 37.)

Knowing the wonders that happened that first Christmas night, let us be bold in asking God for every blessing under the heavens this Christmas, for ourselves and for others, especially during Holy Communion so that, like Mary, we may be living tabernacles for the Indwelling God. Let us beg Him to draw all unbelievers into His magnificent light and to never allow anything to dim His Light within us. Like Joseph, may we be so awed in His Presence that we remain in spirit on our knees in adoration. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

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