



Theology Corner

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Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

Should we call Mary the “Mother of God”?

We see in many Protestant circles, a general discontent with the title “Mother of God” that we attribute to Mary. I think it is important to understand that any issue with this is a pure misunderstanding. It seems that the confusion lies in the fact that many believe this title somehow raises Mary above God, but this is simply not the case. In fact, none of the Protestant Reformers took issue with this title. Mary indeed gave birth to Jesus, and this makes her his mother. No Christian denies that Mary was his mother. So to say that Mary is *not* the mother of God would be to deny the divinity of Christ. For instance, given that Mary is the mother of Jesus, if we acknowledge that Jesus is truly God, then to deny that Mary is the mother of God would be to say that Jesus is not actually God. Perhaps he is a half-God. We would, in effect, be saying that Christ is not fully divine and fully human. This thought is actually not a new one, as a bishop named Nestorius rejected the title “Θεοτόκος” (transliterated as Theotokos, meaning “God-bearer”). He rejected it because he thought that Mary could only be referred to as the “Christ-bearer” since she gave birth to the human person of Jesus. This heresy was condemned at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD. The Church confirmed that Christ is indeed one person with dual natures. This is why we profess, in the Creed, that Jesus is true God from true God, consubstantial with the Father. In other words, he is of the same substance or essence as God the Father. From this, we have developed the Christological doctrine known as the **Hypostatic union** of Christ’s fully human and fully divine nature in **one** person. Given what we now know, we can see that calling Mary the mother of God, is just calling it like it is. For she is actually the mother of Christ, who happens to also be truly God and truly man. That is the whole idea of the incarnation – Jesus is indeed God in the flesh.

I’d like to conclude on a spiritual note. By recognizing Mary as the Mother of God, it puts into perspective the role she plays in the whole Church. Just as Christ honored his mother, we should do the same. Mary serves as our spiritual mother and takes us to Jesus. Lumen Gentium tells us that Mary is “mother to us in the order of grace.” When we draw near to Mary we consequently draw near to her Son, Jesus Christ. She constantly intercedes for us and prays for us as any caring mother would do. *Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis!*