

Mary the Mother of God (2017)

It was in December of 2015 that the National Geographic magazine came out with this edition where on the front cover we have a picture of Mary with the caption: "The Most powerful Woman in the World." The article is quite well done, talking a great deal about Mary, showing maps of where she has appeared, titles that she has had and more. It describes how she is revered in the world of Catholicism and Islam, yes, Mary is important to the muslim world as well. But I hope you didn't miss something in the caption on the cover of the magazine, "The Most Powerful Woman in the World." I don't know what the authors intention was but she doesn't say something to the effect: "The Most Powerful Woman in the World 2000 years ago, or that ever lived." I read that she is the most powerful woman in the world even today, that she lives and intercedes in peoples lives even now. I don't believe Mary would feel comfortable being called the most powerful woman in the world. We don't real hear much of what she spoke in scripture and as we hear today in the gospel she kept much to herself. Mary, the Mother of God is who the Church celebrates today in a special way.

There has been a great deal written about Mary. Perhaps one of the most prolific writers on Mary is Saint Louis Marie De Montfort. He wrote a wonderful book called The True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Saint John Paul II was deeply influenced by it. He would later write a papal encyclical on Mary entitled Redemptoris Mater. I spent time with this document this past week in preparation for this homily. *Much of what I have to say is directly based on this encyclical. and directly taken from his writings.*

John Paul II's document is broken up into several segments, which of-course I can't cover in this short of time. I would like to touch on however three things, Mary in Christ, Mary as mediator and Mary as our mother.

First, when the angel Gabrielle came to Mary at the Annunciation he says: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you.

- *Pope John Paul remarks, the archangel doesn't call her by her name Mary, but by the phrase "Full of Grace" as if it is her real name. Grace, a special gift. Saint John Paul II goes on to say: "It is in Mary that the union of the Son of Man and human nature take place. From the moment of her conception, the beginning of her existence she belonged to Christ. Mary receives life from Him to whom she herself gave life as a mother. Mary, full of grace and forever in Christ as he is in her. As you can see John Paul II will stress the union between mother and Son.*

Second, let me touch on Mary as mediator. John Paul II uses the biblical account of the wedding at Cana to delve into the concept of Mary as mediator. He says:

- *"When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come' " (Jn. 2:3-4). Even though Jesus' reply to his mother sounds like a refusal. Mary nevertheless turns to the servants and says to them: "Do whatever he tells you"*

(Jn. 2:5). What deep understanding existed between Jesus and his mother? How can we probe the mystery of their intimate spiritual union? But the fact speaks for itself. The description of the Cana event outlines what is actually manifested as a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say Mary's solicitude for human beings, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs. At Cana in Galilee there is shown only one concrete aspect of human need, apparently a small one of little importance ("They have no wine"). But it has a symbolic value: this coming to the aid of human needs means, at the same time, bringing those needs within the radius of Christ's messianic mission and salvific power. Thus there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings. She puts herself "in the middle," that is to say she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother. She knows that as such she can point out to her Son the needs of mankind, and in fact, she "has the right" to do so. Her mediation is thus in the nature of intercession: Mary "intercedes" for mankind. At Cana, thanks to the intercession of Mary and the obedience of the servants, Jesus begins "his hour."

Finally, let us look at what John Paul II has to say about Mary as being our mother. He starts off at Golgotha.

- *"Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother: 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:25–27).*
- *One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it is clearly stated and established. The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery—a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity—is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind. The man at the foot of the Cross is John, "the disciple whom he loved." But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Vatican Council does not hesitate to call Mary "the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind": since she "belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings.*

I have a dear friend who told me once that she was having great difficulty with one of her children. In her prayer she would envision picking her child up in her arms, carrying her to Mary and placing her child in Mary's arms, asking Mary to bring her child to Jesus and lay her child at his feet to be healed. This image has stayed with me for years. I too have done the same. Mary, the most powerful woman in the world. She is my mother, she is your mother, she is the mother of the Son of God.