

# A Message from Godfrey

## The Blessed Virgin Mary

Today, with the rest of the Western Church we celebrate the importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the *theotikos* or God bearer, who willingly answered God's call to be the mother of the Son of God. The following gives us some biblical references from the Old and New Testaments which may help us to a greater understanding of her importance in the story of salvation history.

Mary's importance is not to be measured by the mere number of biblical citations but her central role in biblical revelation. In his 1987 encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater* ("Mother of the Redeemer"), St. John Paul II points to "the mystery of that 'woman' who, from the first chapters of the Book of Genesis until the Book of Revelation, accompanies the revelation of God's salvific plan for humanity." Likewise, in his 1988 apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* ("On the Dignity and Vocation of Women"), John Paul II notes that, because the Incarnation "constitutes the culminating and definitive point of God's self-revelation to humanity ... a woman is to be found at the centre of this salvific event." Mary, the mother of the Incarnate Word, is essential to God's plan of salvation because Jesus is the culmination of salvation history.

The Church Fathers found many foreshadowings or prefigurements of Mary in the Old Testament. They saw her as the woman at enmity with the serpent (Gn 3:15); the "New Eve" who will be "the mother of all the living" (Gn 3:20); "the daughter Zion" (Zec 2:14), and "the Ark of the Covenant" (Ex 40; cf. Rv 11:19). In 2 Samuel 6:9, David says: "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" In a very similar way in Luke 1:43, Elizabeth exclaims: "And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" David dances with joy before the ark of the Lord (2 Sm 6:14-15) just as John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb of St. Elizabeth when Mary, carrying the child Jesus in her womb, approaches (Lk 1:41). Mary is also foreshadowed as the king's mother in 1 Kings 2:19; as the "closed gate" of perpetual virginity in Ezekiel 44:1-2; and as the Virgin Mother of Emmanuel in Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Mt 1:23).

In the New Testament, Mary plays a central role because she is the mother of Christ, the redeemer. St. Paul alludes to Mary in Galatians 4:4-5, and all four Gospels speak of her. Mary is shown as the Virgin Mother of Emmanuel (Mt 1:22-23) who flees to Egypt with Jesus and Joseph (Mt 2:13-21). In the Gospel of Luke, Mary is prominent at the Annunciation (1:26-38) and the Visitation (1:39-45). Also in Luke, she prays the Magnificat (1:46-56), gives birth to Jesus (2:1-7), presents him in the Temple (2:22-38) and later finds him in the Temple preaching among the teachers of the law (2:41-52). In John's Gospel, Mary appeals to Jesus at the wedding feast of Cana to perform his first miracle (2:1-12); she's also present at the foot of the cross where Our Lord gives her as mother to John and (by extension) to all Christians (19:25-27). Mary is present with the apostles in the upper room praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:14).

Mary was present at the birth of the Church and is of great significance to us as she is our Patron Saint.

Thoughts and Prayers

Godfrey

