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The Annunciation: Magisterium, Saints, Poets

Selected texts on the
culminating moment in
mankind's history: the
Incarnation of the Son of God.

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VOICE OF THE MAGISTERIUM

56. The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother, so that just as a woman had a share in bringing

about death, so also a woman should contribute to life. This is preeminently true of the Mother of Jesus, who gave to the world the Life that renews all things, and who was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role. It is no wonder then that it was customary for the Fathers to refer to the Mother of God as all holy and free from every stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature.

Enriched from the first instant of her conception with the splendour of an entirely unique holiness, the virgin of Nazareth is hailed by the heralding angel, by divine command, as "full of grace" (cf. Lk 1:38), and to the heavenly messenger she replies: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38).

Thus the daughter of Adam, Mary, consenting to the word of God, became the Mother of Jesus. Committing herself wholeheartedly and impeded by no sin to God's saving will, she devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption, by the grace of Almighty God.

Rightly, therefore, the Fathers see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man's salvation through faith and obedience. For, as St Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching: "the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her

disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith." Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her "Mother of the living," and frequently claim: "death through Eve, life through Mary."

**Second Vatican Council, Dogm
const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 56**

39. And, indeed, if the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary is God, assuredly she who bore him is rightly and deservedly to be called the Mother of God. If there is only one person in Christ, and this is Divine, without any doubt Mary ought to be called, by all, not the mother of Christ the man only, but *Theotokos*, or God-bearer. Let us all, therefore, venerate the tender Mother of God, whom her cousin Elizabeth saluted as "the Mother of my Lord" (Luke i. 43), who, in the words of Ignatius Martyr, brought forth God (*Ad Ephes.* vii. 18-20); and from whom, as Tertullian professes, God was born; whom the

Eternal Godhead has gifted with the fulness of grace and endowed with such great dignity....

42. From this dogma of the divine maternity, as from the outpouring of a hidden spring, flow forth the singular grace of Mary and her dignity, which is the highest after God. Nay more, as Aquinas says admirably: "The Blessed Virgin, from this that she is the Mother of God, has a certain infinite dignity, from the infinite good which is God."

(*Summ. Theo.*, III. a.6.) Cornelius a Lapse unfolds this and explains it more fully, in these words: "The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God; therefore she is far more excellent than all the Angels, even the Seraphim and Cherubim. She is the Mother of God; therefore she is most pure and most holy, so that under God no greater purity can be imagined. She is the Mother of God; therefore whatever privilege (in the

order of sanctifying grace) has been granted to any one of the Saints, she obtains it more than all" (*In Matt. i. 6*).

**Pius XI, Enc. *Lux veritatis*,
December 25, 1931**

VOICE OF THE SAINTS

Hail Mary. This name, Mary, is not inserted here by Gabriel, but by the devotion of the faithful, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Rightly is the word *Ave* addressed to her, who was ever entirely immune from the "woe" of sin.

Thus it behooved the Mother of God to be, as St. Anselm testifies: "It was fitting that the conception of the God-Man should be of a most pure mother, that the purity of the Virgin-Mother, than which, under God, there was none greater, should be hers to whom God has willed to give His Only Son, whom He had

begotten, equal to Himself, from His own Heart, that He should so give Him to her to be at the same time the Son of God and the Son of Man."

Again, how full of grace was Mary by the abounding plenitude of her gifts is well signified when it is said to her: *Full of grace*. And truly full, and ever full, as St. Anselm testifies, when he most devoutly exclaims: "O Woman full and over-full of grace, of whose abundance every creature is revived and refreshed."

And, how secure and firm was Mary by the Divine presence is well signified by the words, *The Lord is with thee*. Rightly is Mary safe and secure, when the Lord is present with her; for the Lord, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is with her, so that she is in an especial manner most intimately connected with God. St. Bernard shows this when he says: "Nor is God

the Son alone with thee, who thou dost clothe with thy flesh; but also God the Holy Spirit, of whom thou dost conceive; and God the Father, who hath begotten that which thou conceivest."

St. Bonaventure, from "The Angelic Salutation" (13th c.)

When the Blessed Virgin said Yes, freely, to the plans revealed to her by the Creator, the divine Word assumed a human nature: a rational soul and a body, which was formed in the most pure womb of Mary. The divine nature and the human were united in a single Person: Jesus Christ, true God and, thenceforth, true Man; the only-begotten and eternal Son of the Father and, from that moment on, as Man, the true son of Mary.

This is why our Lady is the Mother of the Incarnate Word, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity who has

united our human nature to himself for ever, without any confusion of the two natures. The greatest praise we can give to the Blessed Virgin is to address her loud and clear by the name that expresses her very highest dignity: Mother of God.

St. Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 274

VOICE OF THE POETS

Let us be guided by the words of Gabriel, citizen of heaven, and say: Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you!

We say again with him: Hail, O our such longed for joy! Hail, O rapture of the Church! Hail, O name so full of fragrance! Hail, O countenance illuminated by the light of God from which such beauty flows!

Hail, O bright mother of the dawning light! Hail, O stainless mother of

saintliness! Hail, O gushing fount of living water!

Hail, new mother and moulder of the new-born One! Hail, O inexplicable and mystery-filled mother! Hail, you who give honor to virginity!

Hail, O humble space, which welcomed to itself, Him whom the world cannot contain.

Theodotus of Ankara (early 5th c.)

1. Then He called

The Angel Gabriel
And sent him
to The Virgin Mary,

2. At whose consent

The mystery was wrought,

In whom the Trinity

Clothed the Word with flesh.

3. And though Three work this,

It is wrought in the One:

And the Word lived incarnate

In the womb of Mary.

4. And He who had only a Father

Now had a Mother too,

But she was not like others

Who conceive by man.

5. From her own flesh

He received His flesh,

So He is called

Son of God and of man.

**St. John of the Cross, "The
Incarnation" (16th c.)**

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