



# Boston Catholic Journal

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## "FLESH OF MY FLESH" — MARY'S ROLE IN OUR SALVATION

**“Who didst vouchsafe to choose the chaste chamber of the Blessed Virgin Mary to dwell therein”**

**T**hrough the Incarnation, when Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the divine nature of the Son of God was united, and forever remains united, with the human nature of the Son of Man such that the one divine Person Jesus Christ, is indeed both "truly God and truly man".

**The *Unum Necessarium*** (the one thing necessary)

Mary is the one person ever to contribute, to truly give, the one thing to God that was not already His, even as He first imparted it to her. “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein.” (Psalm 24.1)

It was something necessary to the final and perfect fulfillment of the will of God. In fact, it was the one thing that God created but did not possess. Apart from it, the suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection — absolutely necessary to the fulfillment of God's will for the salvation of the world, for the redemption of souls from bondage to sin and death — was impossible: *her very flesh!* Mary assented to the will of God: “*Et Verbum caro factum est*”, "And the Word became flesh!"

Jesus Christ took the *substance* of His sacred *humanity* from Mary. It was in this Sacred Humanity that Christ preached, healed, raised from the dead, gave sight to the blind. It is also in His Sacred Humanity that Christ suffered, was crucified, and died for our sins and through which He purchased our salvation. Had Mary not consented to the will of God; had she refused to be the Mother of God's Son (Who Himself is One with the Father), the one thing absolutely

necessary to our salvation — the *flesh and the humanity* which Jesus Christ assumed, and through which alone salvation came into the world in the Person of Jesus Christ — could never have been possible.

"God is a Spirit" (St. John 4.24), and spirit is not possessed of flesh together with all the limitations inherent within it. God is infinite. Flesh is not. God is everywhere present, flesh is not. God is perfect felicity, which is to say, God *in Himself* has ever been, is, and ever will be, perfectly happy, unassailed by suffering, and pain cannot touch upon Him — but flesh is not! For this reason, Saint Paul tells us that Jesus Christ, "Who being in the form of God ... **emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.**" (Philippians 2.5-7). How? Through the Incarnation. Through whom? Through Mary who contributed her flesh (giving Christ, Who had emptied Himself of "the form of God", the "form of a servant"; in fact the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53 through Whom mankind was redeemed. Only in the humanity that Christ took from Mary alone, could He possibly suffer ... even die! Theologians speak of this in terms of the "Hypostatic Union", or the union of *God* and *Man* in the Person Jesus Christ. Christ is both! But it was in His *humanity* that He suffered and redeemed the world — the humanity, the flesh, *given Him by Mary alone*. In her assent to the will of God, in her "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*", "Be it done to me according to your word" (Saint Luke 1.38), she, the lowly "handmaid of the Lord", gave to God the one thing that Spirit does not, cannot, possess: flesh. *Her* flesh — which the Son of God assumed, becoming through her assent, "True God and True Man."

This is beautifully expressed in *The Little Office* during this hour of Prime through the hymn, "**Memento, rerum Conditor**":

**M**emento, rerum Conditor  
Nostri quod olim corporis  
Sacrata ab alvo Virginis  
Nascendo formam sumpseris

**R**emember, O Creator Lord!  
That in the Virgin's sacred womb  
Thou wast conceiv'd, *and of her flesh*  
*Didst our mortality assume*

Mary's role, then, in our salvation is not, as some contend, marginal; it is central and she can no more be understood apart from Christ than Jesus in His Sacred Humanity can be understood apart from Mary. His flesh is her flesh, and commingled with the flesh of no other! His humanity is, substantively, Mary's humanity... from whence it came and from which it is inseparable.

When Jesus gave Mary to us on the Cross, and us to Mary, He never ceased calling us to Him through her. Jesus Christ speaks to each of us in this way:

"... I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go, till I bring him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me." (Song of Songs 3.4)

It is to a loving acquaintance with Mary, His Mother, that Christ first calls you; to His Mother's House, which is Holy Mother Church, and into that chamber of the love that bore Him, that you, too, may know the love of Mary ...and be no more an orphan in this world, nor a stranger in the world to come.

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\* This does not mean that you cannot or should not pray the entire Office with all 8 Canonical Hours. If God gives you the time, and the inclination (it is His to give, not ours), you are encouraged to do so, although God recognizes that for most of the laity this is not possible with all their obligations to family life and work, which are intrinsic to their holy vocation as fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, the single and the providers for their families. This is your primary vocation. It is through this that God calls you to sanctity in your life. It is far more pleasing to God to attend to a crying or wayward child, an elderly parent, or a distressed spouse, that to utter all the prayers in the world as though you can multiply the grace God gives you through praying much and loving little. One Hour (not 60 minutes) of the Office, if this is all that is available to you, will give you all the grace that you need from God. *Remember the Widow's Pence.* ("And looking on, he saw the rich men cast their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in two brass mites. And he said: Verily I say to you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast into the offerings of God: but she of her want, hath cast in all the living that she had.") (St. Luke 21.1-3)



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