



# Mary

## Mother of God

1 January

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of *Mary, Mother of God*.

In the fifth century, the Church declared Mary 'Theotokos' or 'God-bearer'. It was the culmination of centuries of reflection on Jesus Christ, truly human, truly divine.

The Church's esteem for Mary always points us to Christ and allows us deeper insights into what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.



Excerpts from 'The First Disciple',  
*Landmarks* leaflet No. 22 (The Story Source, 2000).

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## *in the fullness of God's plan*

How are we to understand Mary? John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* ('*Mother of the Redeemer*'), begins by directing our attention to 'the big picture' of salvation history.

Throughout human history, people have experienced God in many ways. But Christians point to a special 'moment'. It occurred in '*the fullness of time*', when God sent the Son to live among us as a human person. This revelation of God in the flesh, this mystery which we call the Incarnation, was set in motion when, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ was conceived in the womb of a Jewish girl, Mary of Nazareth. Thus began the time of salvation.

It was through the spiritual reality of Mary's 'Yes' in faith, and the physical reality of her womanhood, that Christ, the visible face of God, emerged in human history. It is impossible then to view Mary as a distant bystander to God's activity. This woman stands at the heart of God's saving work and of all created persons is most intensely affected by it. When we the Church speak of Mary as 'Mother of God' we are affirming our central belief in the Incarnation: God made flesh in Jesus Christ.

Mary has a special relationship, not just with the Incarnate Word, but with the Church. Her journey in faith is also the story of the whole people of God, of all who journey in faith.

Mary is a mother in the flesh, and more deeply her motherhood is about discipleship in faith. Her faith is total responsiveness to the Spirit of God moving in her life. She is the first to believe. Her witness to Christ precedes the Apostles and the apostolic tradition of the Church.

Mary's faith is like that of Abraham. Abraham's 'Yes' to God and his trust in the divine promise marked the beginning of the 'old' covenant, the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Mary's 'Yes' to God and her act of trust in receiving Christ in her womb marks the beginning of the new and eternal covenant of God with humanity. (RM, 26-27)

### **Reflecting on Mary**

Mothers play a powerful role in giving a family a sense of its identity. The Church is a family in faith. Mary can help us to discover our identity as God's People, especially in times of confusion and struggle.

### **Says an expectant father:**

*My wife and I await the birth of our child. For Cecilia, the pregnancy is so immediate and all consuming. For a man it's different. I share in the pregnancy in as much as I share in Cecilia's experience of it - and as much as she is prepared to let me. Without her I cannot enter into the experience. (Grant)*

### **Think about it:**

In a certain sense, we as Church are dependent on Mary to fully receive Christ. In your own faith journey, how has Mary drawn you closer to Christ?