

God, who made all things, made *himself*, from Mary

As always at New Year, we rejoice to honour Mary under her greatest title, Mother of God. It's a good moment to reflect again on the deep meaning of that wonderful title. We know of course that Mary didn't produce the *divine* nature of Jesus, his existence as God which he had from all eternity, before Mary even existed. But she is truly the Mother of God, because she gave birth to God the Son *in his human nature*. Everything that we receive from our own mothers, God the Son received from Mary.

Some non-Catholics say that we shouldn't call Mary the Mother of God, only the Mother of Jesus. But that error comes from dividing Jesus from God the Son, as though they were two separate persons. The true doctrine is that Jesus *is* God the Son made man. There is the *one* divine *person*, the Second Person of the Trinity, having *two* complete *natures*, divine and human. If Mary wasn't the Mother of God but only the mother of Jesus – that is, if God the Son and Jesus were two separate persons, a divine person and a human person – then human nature would still be separate from God's nature. We wouldn't have the Incarnation, and we wouldn't have salvation.

A great reflection on this amazing reality can be found in the Church's Liturgy for the Immaculate Conception, from the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours, the Divine Office. The second reading for that feast is from St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury at the start of the 1100s, and a Doctor of the Church. He combines truth and devotion and poetry so perfectly that any further comment would be an intrusion. We'll simply read through his words, slowly – realising that we're in the presence of mysteries beyond human comprehension. So St Anselm writes (*emphases added*):

'O woman, full and more than full of grace,
all creation has received of the overflow of your fullness and its youth has been renewed!

'O blessed and more than blessed Virgin, through *your* blessing *all* creation is blessed.
Not only is creation *blessed by* the Creator, but creation *blesses* its Creator.

'God gave to Mary his Son, the Only-begotten of his heart,
equal to himself, whom he loved as himself.

'From Mary he fashioned himself a Son, not another one, but the same,
so that by nature there would be one and the same Son, both of God, and of Mary.

'Every nature is created by God, and God is born of Mary.
God created all things, and Mary gave birth to God.
God himself, who made all things, made *himself*, from Mary.

'In this way he *remade* all that he had made.
He who was able to make all things out of *nothing*,
when they had been defaced would not *remake* them without Mary's help.

'God is, then, Father of all *created* things, and Mary is mother of all that has been *re-created*.

'God is Father of the *institution* of all things, and Mary is mother of the *restitution* of all things.

‘God begot him through whom all things were *made*
and Mary gave birth to him through whom all things are *saved*.

‘God begot him without whom nothing at all *exists*
and Mary gave birth to him without whom nothing that exists is *good*.

‘The Lord is indeed with you.
For he granted to you, that all nature should owe so great a debt to you, jointly with himself.’