

## Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God: The Baker Woman, with Jesus and Mary.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. How can Mary, a human being, be the mother of the Infinite One? This mystery is best understood when we focus on Jesus Christ. Today, on the Octave Day of Christmas, we do just that. We consider who this child born in Bethlehem was and is.

First of all, the child is the Eternal Son of the Father. He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity taking on a human nature. The concept of person and nature is used by theologians to help explain the mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord, the Eternal Word taking flesh. Nature refers to what something is. Person refers to who something is. A dog has a very different nature than a squirrel. The difference between a man's nature and a dog's is even greater. Human nature can think and choose and thus can love. A dog is not a human. And a human is not God. When we ask what is God, we are asking what is the nature of the divine. A divine nature is not subject to physical laws. It is not restricted by time, or even by space. Jesus Christ has both a divine nature, He is the Eternal Second Person of the Trinity, and a human nature, He took on humanity through the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the mother of his human nature, not his divine nature. Mary is not a goddess. She is a human being who was prepared to be the vessel through which the Word would become flesh.

Jesus has two natures, but he is only one person, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Person refers not to what Jesus is, but to Who he is. He is the Eternal God, One with the Father and the Spirit. He cannot be separated from them. Mary is the mother of the human nature of Jesus, but there is only one Person of Jesus, one Who. The antiphon for the Benedictus in today's morning prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours contains this statements of our faith: Though His two natures remain distinct; He is One. That is why we say Mary is the Mother of God.

This is what we are celebrating today.

What must it have been like for the Eternal Word, to take on the nature of a human within the Blessed Virgin? He had to feel her heart beating. He had to be aware of the experience of being a human when he was only a microscopic zygote, then an embryo, then a fetus. When during her pregnancy Mary prayed to God, the child within her heard and answered her prayers. The Incarnation began at the Annunciation. Life outside of His Mother began on Christmas.

There is a Christmas hymn, the *Baker Woman*, attributed to Hubert J. Richards and, perhaps, rooted in a eleventh century reflection by Blessed Gisella of Hungary, that explains the mystery Jesus and Mary in a very simple way. Our children's choir used to sing it. I want to recite the words of the hymn.

*1. The baker woman in her humble lodge  
received a grain of wheat from God.  
For nine whole months the grain she stored.  
Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*

*Make us the bread, Mary, Mary.  
Make us the bread, we need to be fed.*

*2. The baker woman took the road which led  
to Bethlehem, the house of bread.  
To knead the bread she labored through the night,  
and brought it forth about midnight.  
Bake us the bread, Mary, Mary.  
Bake us the bread, we need to be fed.*

*3. She baked the bread for thirty years  
by the fire of her love and the salt of her tears,  
by the warmth of a heart so tender and bright,  
and the bread was golden brown and white.  
Bring us the bread, Mary, Mary.  
Bring us the bread, we need to be fed.*

*4. After thirty years the bread was done.  
It was taken to town by her only son;  
the soft white bread to be given free  
to the hungry people of Galilee.  
Give us the bread, Mary, Mary.  
Give us the bread, we need to be fed.*

*5. For thirty coins the bread was sold,  
and a thousand teeth so cold, so cold,  
tore it to pieces on Friday noon  
when the sun turned black and red the moon.  
Break us the bread, Mary, Mary,  
Break us the bread, we need to be fed.*

*6. And when she saw the bread so white,  
the living bread she had made at night,  
devoured as wolves might devour a sheep,  
the baker woman began to weep.  
Weep for the bread, Mary, Mary.  
Weep for the bread, we need to be fed.*

*7. But the bakerwoman's only son  
appeared to his friends when three days had run  
on the road which to Emmaus led,  
and they knew him in the breaking of bread.  
Lift up your head, Mary, Mary.  
Lift up your head, for now we've been fed.*

How beautifully this captures today's Solemnity. Mary, Mother of God, baked the

Bread of God within her, delivered this bread in Bethlehem, the city that means *House of Bread*, and watches as we are fed by the Bread.

She is the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God. She is the Mother of God.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death,  
Amen.