

THE NEW MAN AND THE NEW WOMAN:

Jesus Christ and Mary, Mother of God

I. Jesus Christ and the Incarnation

A. Who is Jesus Christ?

1. Jesus Christ is God become man. He is the second, eternal, divine person in the Trinity, and a Jewish man born of Mary around the beginning of the first century A.D.

B. How did this happen? How did God become man?

1. We use the term Incarnation to designate the event of God becoming man
 - a) Although “incarnate” means “in the flesh,” Jesus Christ has not only flesh, but a whole human nature: body and soul. He’s completely God, and completely man. He is One Person with Two Natures.
2. One way to think of it, is to say that in Jesus Christ, there is one “Who” – the Eternal Person of the Word, and two “Whats” – humanity and divinity.
 - a) Think of what happens when someone writes a letter with a pen. If we said, “ Who wrote that letter,” the answer would be the one name of the person. If we said, “ What wrote that letter,” the answer would be the two natures: a human being and a pen. Something kind of like that occurs in the Incarnation.

C. Why did this happen? Why did God become man?

1. For a lot of reasons:
 - a) To show us His love
 - b) To show us Himself
 - c) To show us how to be human
 - d) To make up for the damage our sin had caused
2. Most importantly, He came to earth to be the bridge between us and God
 - a) Think of an infinitely deep river, with an infinitely strong current. You’re on the near shore – the human shore – but you were made to get to the opposite shore – the divine shore – and there’s no way to get across.

- b) Then imagine that on just one point, the far shore starts coming to you, and eventually merges with your side of the river, forming a land bridge that is both near shore and far shore.
- c) That's Jesus. That's why He's the only way to God

II. Now, what about Mary?

- A. The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 5, "The Incarnation"

III. Mary and the Immaculate Conception

- A. Wouldn't it be a shame there had been such a thing as a perfect man, but in all of creation we never got to see a perfect woman? Or wouldn't it be a shame if Jesus gave us His Father to be Our Father, but not His Mother to be Our Mother?

- 1. Fortunately, that's not what happened. It has been revealed to us by the Church that, in fact, Mary was Immaculately Conceived, which means that Mary was free of all sin from the first moments of her existence and throughout her life.

- B. How do we know? How do we know Mary was free from original sin?

- 1. Well, primarily because Gabriel gives her a title no one else in Scripture is given, "Full of Grace" (Luke 1:28). And you can't be "full of grace" if you contain sin or the effects of sin.

- a) Just like a cup can't be totally filled up with water if it has any rocks in it.

- 2. But does that mean Mary didn't need a savior?

- a) No, it just means she was saved from sin before it could reach her.

- b) A vaccine saves you from a disease, but it saves you before the disease can get you. That's what happened with the Immaculate Conception.

- 3. Why? Why did God decide to keep Mary free from the effects of Original Sin?

- a) Well, first of all, remember that Mary is the source of Jesus' humanity

- (1) So if Our Lord was to have a perfect human nature, it makes sense He should receive His humanity from an uncontaminated source.

- b) Also, since Mary's role was to be the New Woman – the one to participate in Christ's war on sin – it makes sense that she should be completely sinless.

- (1) After all, if she was in any way under the power of sin, she would be in a compromised position – she wouldn't be able to give herself entirely to battling evil.

- (2) So Jesus equipped Mary to be His perfect ally And her role as Christ's ally began at the Annunciation

IV. The Annunciation: Our Salvation Begins

- A. At the Annunciation, we see what God's perfect love for humanity looks like, and we see what humanity's perfect love for God looks like
 1. God's perfect love for humanity takes the form of a man: Jesus Christ
 2. Humanity's perfect love for God takes the form of a woman: Mary
- B. First, God presents His plan to Mary
 1. The Angel Gabriel comes and tells her that she has been chosen to be the Mother of God
 - a) Satan came to tell Eve about making men into gods
 - b) Gabriel came to tell Mary about making God into Man
 2. Gabriel explains that because this child will have God as His Father, there will be no need for Mary to cease being a virgin.
 - a) In fact, her perpetual virginity will be the permanent sign that this child is of God – since it manifests that He's not the child of any human father
 3. Now it had happened previously in Scripture that angels had been sent to announce births (as in the case of Isaac, Samson and John the Baptist).
 - a) But never before had the one who heard the angel explicitly accepted his message.
- C. Finally, in Mary, we see humanity responding to God as it should! We see humanity the way it's supposed to be!
 1. She says, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).
 - a) This is something new! Acceptance and obedience towards God's will! This is the beginning of a new direction for the human race.
 - b) Mary is the preview of the holiness we are all destined to.
 - c) And by her "yes" to Gabriel, she welcomes God into her womb.
- V. The work of Redemption has begun. And when it is completed on the Cross, this man and this woman will be together again.



The Annunciation Prado Altarpiece by Fra Angelico

1. What event is the artist portraying here? Who are all the figures in this painting? What do you notice about the overall composition of the painting: the colors, the background, the lighting, etc.?
2. Read Luke 1:26-30. What does the archangel Gabriel tell the Blessed Virgin Mary?
3. Why do you think the artist chose to include Adam and Eve in the background?
4. How did Mary respond to God's call in comparison to how Eve responded?
5. What would your reaction be if an angel told you about a special mission God wanted you to carry out?