

fundamental to the Christian life itself, to the Christian experience of the world.

Sound Mariology has always been understood in Christological terms. If the Gospel revealed nothing more than the fact that Jesus Christ, God and man, was born of Mary, this alone would be sufficient for the Church to love her and to draw theological conclusions from pondering this relationship of Mother and Son. We need no other revelations. Mary is a self-evident and essential *datum* and dimension of the Gospel. Let us situate Mary properly in our life of faith and devotion after the example of Jesus.



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WHY SUCH ATTENTION TO MARY?

by: Brother John M. Samaha

Why do Catholics and other Christians direct so much attention to, and make such a fuss about the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are many reasons. It is important to situate clearly Marian doctrine and devotion in Christian life.

In the various Christian traditions Marian doctrine and devotion take shape in manifold and diverse ways. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic Church and others have strived to promote new and more careful study of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, in the mystery of Christ and of the Church; and to encourage theological faculties -- and the faithful -- in the pursuit of knowledge, research and piety with regard to Mary of Nazareth. The Mother of the Lord is understood as a "*datum* of revelation" and a "maternal presence" always operative in the life of the Church and of Christians, to use the expressions of the instruction *The Virgin Mary in Intellectual and Spiritual Formation* (1988).

The history of theological reflection and of worship witnesses to the Church's faith and attention regarding the Virgin Mary and her mission in the history of salvation. This is evident, though in different modes, in both the Western Church and in the Eastern Church.

The deeper the understanding of the mystery of the *Theotokos* the more profound is the understanding of the mystery of Christ, of the Church, and of the vocation of humanity. Concerning Mary, everything is relative to Jesus Christ; only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery fully clear.



Conversely it may generally be said that knowing Mary enlightens our appreciation of Christ and of the Church.

To the degree in which the mystery of the Church is understood, the mystery of Mary is apparent. Knowing Mary, the Church recognizes its origins, its mission of grace, its destiny to glory, and the pilgrimage of faith which guides it.

The Virgin Mary is like a mirror reflecting the mighty works of God, which theology has the task of illustrating. The importance of Mariological reflection derives from the importance of Christology (the study of Christ's divinity and humanity), from the value of ecclesiology (the study of the Church) and pneumatology (the study of the Holy Spirit), from the meaning of Christian anthropology (the study of human relationships), and from eschatology (the study of the last things and our eternal destiny), and is an integral part of them.

The veneration of Mary, when properly understood, permeates the entire life of the Church; it is a dimension of dogma and of piety, of Christology and ecclesiology. This dimension needs to be made explicit today in connection with the problems of humanity. Mariology expresses something