

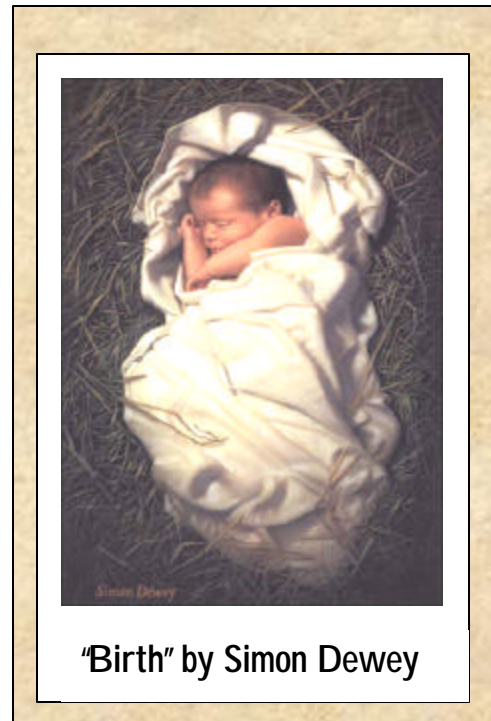
Theotokos

Celebrating Mary as the Mother of God

Theotokos (pronounced *thay-o-toe-kose*) is a Greek word meaning "God-bearer." This is one of the oldest titles given to Our Lady, stemming from one of the oldest debates in our tradition concerning Jesus' own nature as God and man.

St. Paul explains in his letter to the Hebrews, that Jesus came as a mediator - the *one* and *only* Mediator - in the new covenant between God and man. In order for him to bridge the gap that man had forged by sin, Christ had to equally represent both God and mankind in a new covenant - he had to be himself fully God *and* fully human, but in one person. This mystery of our faith is defined as the *hypostatic union*; we believe that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures: one human, and one divine. St. Paul expounds upon this in the second chapter of the letter to the Philippians:

"...Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus,
Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross..."



In short, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity humbled himself, broke through all boundaries of time and space, came to us and assumed a human nature at the moment of his conception in the womb of Mary. If we were to try to put this in a diagram, it would look something like the drawing on the back of this page...

*"...In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him
nothing came to be..."*

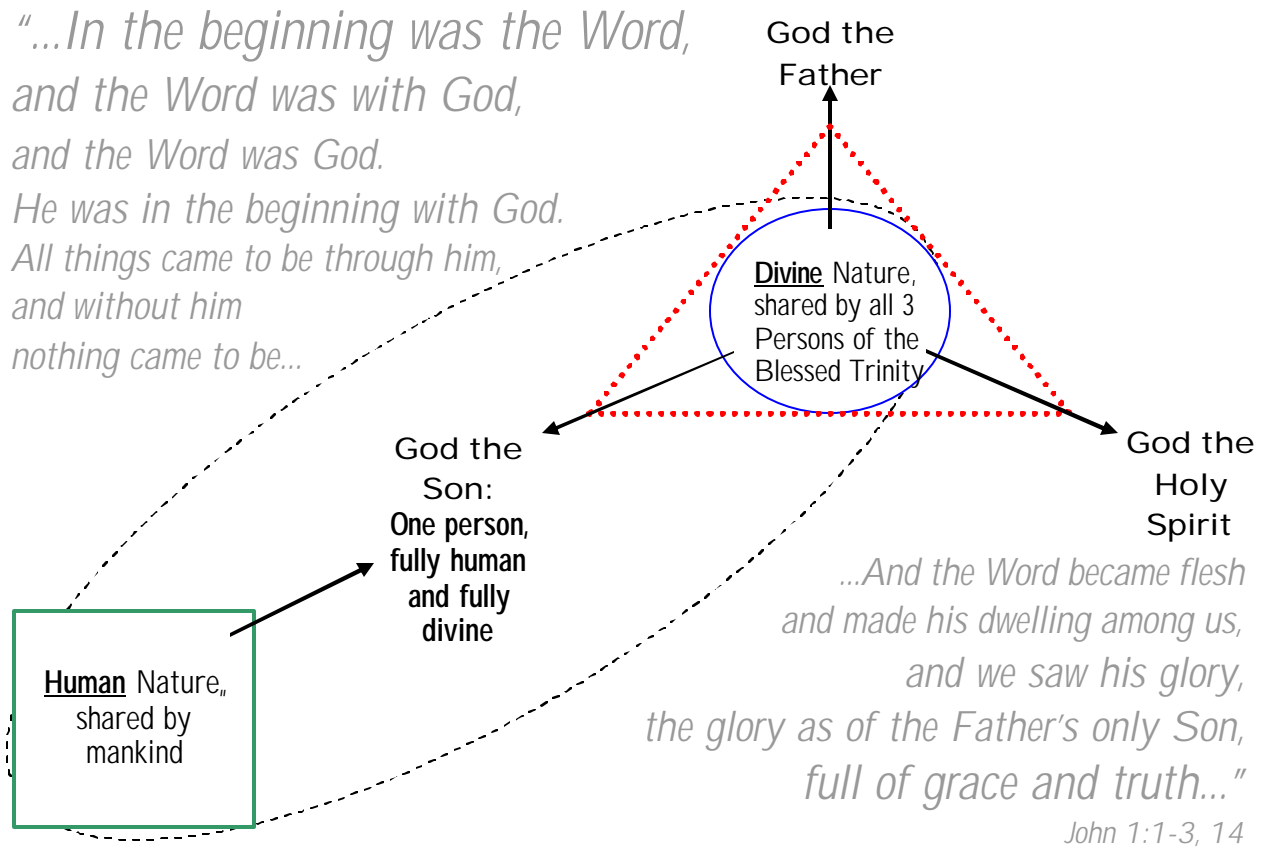


Diagram © 2005 Prof. Michael Sirilla, Franciscan University of Steubenville

What does this have to do with Jesus' mother, Mary? We recall again what the Catechism tells us about our devotion to her: "What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ" (CCC 487). Because we know that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine, we can then accurately say that Mary was the Mother of God, in that he assumed human form in her womb, and allowed himself to be cared for and instructed by her and Joseph in their house in Nazareth. This is an honor and a title belonging to her alone, of all women in the history of mankind! God had his eye on her from the dawn of creation, to be the mother of his only Son. She is indeed the most blessed among women! Imagine the graces she received, carrying Jesus in her womb for nine months, and spending every moment of every day with him as he. We honor her on this *solemnity* (a high feast of the Church) of January 1st, for her holiness, her obedience to the Lord's will, and for the singular honor of being the Mother of God.

Go the extra mile...
We are obliged to attend mass on January 1st to celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, but there is more you can do to keep that day holy on your own time! Consider placing a flower near a statue of Our Lady, or praying a decade of the Rosary as a family or with a friend. She loves bringing our prayers to the feet of her Son!