

Annunciation

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[0 : 0 0] And the Virgin's name was Mary. Words from today's Holy Gospel in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Often Anglicans, even some Anglo-Catholics, are uncomfortable, some even afraid to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary.

There are several reasons for this, but the main one seems to be because it's considered to be Roman, as in Roman Catholic. That is untrue. The veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary is Catholic, period.

The Eastern churches are far more pious in their veneration than Rome is. At least since the 5th century, when the Ecumenical Council at Ephesus, guided by the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised in St. John 16.13, dogmatically declared that Mary is rightly called Theotokos, the Mother of God, the churches honored her as such.

But even if the Council of Fathers had not made this decree, Scripture itself teaches us to venerate the Mother of our Lord. All that the Catholic faith teaches about the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the reasons why the faithful are to venerate her, are provided in Scripture.

As we hear in today's Gospel, God sent the angel Gabriel to inform Mary that she, of all women who have ever been born, or ever would be born, had been chosen by God to be the mother of His Son.

[1 : 3 6] Just think about that. All the women who have ever been born, or ever will be born, one who was chosen, Mary of Nazareth.

This is the good work God had prepared for Mary to walk in. In turn, Gabriel saluted her, Rejoice, highly favored one.

The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women. Mary is the one honored with the great blessing, the greatest blessing, a woman could receive.

She, above all women, had found this favor. Not Sarah, not Rebecca or Rachel, not Bathsheba. It was Mary of Nazareth, who was chosen by God to be the mother of His only V'noton Son. This alone should cause us to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary.

[2 : 4 1] God chose her to be the Ark of the New Covenant, the one woman to contain the true manna from heaven inside of her, within her womb.

Our Lord's human nature comes through her. Gabriel said, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the highest will overshadow you. Therefore also, that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

If Jesus is the Son of God, and of course He is, then Mary must be the mother of God. And as the mother of God, she is worthy of our veneration.

But if that were not reason enough, St. Luke has inspired to go on to tell us that when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, who was six months pregnant with St. John Baptist, Elizabeth said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things, which were told her from the Lord.

[3 : 5 6] Elizabeth confirms Mary's blessedness and her place as the mother of her Lord, the mother of God, Theotokos, and venerates her as such.

Each and all these passages teach us, Anglo-Catholic Christians, that we are right, privileged even, to venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary.

And to be clear, we do not worship her. She does not answer our prayers. But as the Queen of the Saints, she is a powerful intercessor for our prayers.

She alone was with our Lord at both His conception and birth, and His death and resurrection. She is the truest disciple, the truest follower of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, in response to Gabriel's announcement, Mary said, Behold the maidservant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word. Oh, that each of us would respond in kind to the good works God has prepared for us to walk in.

[5 : 13] Such humility. Such obedience. This may be the greatest reason why we should venerate her, why we should want to emulate her.

We certainly should follow her example and willingly submit to God's word as Mary did. Willingly allow Christ to dwell within us. As Mary did.

And stand with Him at the cross and in His resurrection. As Mary did. If we will, then venerating the Blessed Virgin Mary will not be uncomfortable.

We will not fear doing so. We will know that in doing so, we follow the example of the Archangel Gabriel, St. Elizabeth, and the whole of the church for at least 1,500 years.

May we give the mother of our Lord the honor due to her, and in doing so, give glory to her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who chose Mary to be His mother.

[6 : 18] In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.