

Homily  
Memorial of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major in Rome  
Monday of the 18<sup>th</sup> Week in OT  
August 5, 2024

Jesus is fully human and fully divine. We know this; we preach this; we acknowledge this in our celebration of the Eucharist, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Just as I cannot separate from my wife, “The two shall become one,” Jesus cannot separate His human nature from His divine nature. He is the only begotten Son of God, with no beginning or end. Through His incarnation, Jesus became one of us, a man with all the physical attributes we all have, skin and bones, flesh and blood. Jesus enjoys the hypostatic union, His humanity and divinity, inseparable and enduring.

First raised at the order of Pope Liberius in the mid-fourth century, the Liberian basilica was rebuilt by Pope Sixtus III shortly after the Council of Ephesus affirmed Mary’s title as Mother of God, Theotokos, in 431. Rededicated at that time to the Mother of God, St. Mary Major is the largest church in the world honoring God through Mary. In definitively declaring Mary as Mother of God, we are affirming Jesus as fully human and fully divine, the hypostatic union. And we are affirming Mary as the Arc of the New Covenant, a creature just like us, in need of salvation just like us, but set apart for a unique role, to bring God into the world for our salvation.

In the first reading, we hear, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race." God loves us and wants to be with us, so much so that He sent His only Son to be One with us. Jesus, fully human so He knows our struggles and temptations and sorrows and victories, and fully divine, so He can fulfill what we could not in our human frailty.

In today’s Gospel, a woman expresses her admiration for the mother of Jesus. Jesus doesn’t discredit His mother, but rightly places the admiration first on God, that we are to focus on what God wants of us, to align our will to His. This is exactly what Mary does for us; she gathers our attention and redirects it to her Son.

It is right and good to have our personal devotion to Mary. This is why we pray the Rosary and remember today the dedication of Saint Mary Major. All of these sacramentals point to her Son, where all our attention needs to be focused. And we enjoy her intercession for our prayers, needs and desires. What better way do we have than to ask our Mother for Jesus’ help. Seek it often.