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## **Mary, Mother of God, Theotokos**

*A Reflection for the Feast of the Dedication  
of the Basilica of St. Mary Major, August 5*

*From a homily of*

**St. Cyril of Alexandria**

**Early Church Father and Doctor of the Church**

*delivered at the Council of Ephesus, 431 AD*



*Tradition has it that in August 352 AD, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Pope Liberius instructing him to build a church in her honor on the Esquiline hill, on the site previously occupied by the Temple of the goddess Cybele. The floorplan was outlined the next day by a miraculous August snowfall. This basilica, however, was not completed until the reign of Pope Sixtus III (432-440) most probably hastened by the proclamation in 431 by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus that it is truly right and fitting to honor Mary under the title of "Theotokos" or "Mother of God." This Church, now one of the five patriarchal basilicas of Rome, was first called "Our Lady of the Snows" in honor of the miracle but came to be called "St. Mary Major" because it is the first and largest of the 26 churches of Rome dedicated in honor of the Virgin Mary. It has also been known as Santa Maria del Presepe since it houses a relic of the holy Crib of the infant Jesus.*

*St. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, presided over the 3rd great Ecumenical Council of the Church which met in 431 AD in Ephesus and which proclaimed Mary as the Theotokos ("God-bearer" or "Mother of God"). This reading, taken from a homily he preached to the council (Hom 4: PG 77, 992. 995-996), is used in the Roman Catholic Office of Readings for the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore) on August 5. St. Cyril was one of the most important of the Orthodox Catholic Early Church Fathers. For more readings on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, [click here](#).*

I see here a joyful company of Christian men met together in ready response to the call of Mary, the holy and ever-virgin Mother of God. The great grief that weighed upon me is changed into joy by your presence, venerable Fathers. Now the beautiful saying of David the psalmist: *How good and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity (Psalm 133)* has come true for us.

Therefore, holy and incomprehensible Trinity, we salute you at whose summons we have come together to this church of Mary, the Mother of God.

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Mary, Mother of God, we salute you. Precious vessel, worthy of the whole world's reverence, you are an ever-shining light, the crown of virginity, the symbol of orthodoxy, an indestructible temple, the place that held him whom no place can contain, mother and virgin. Because of you the holy gospels could say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

We salute you, for in your holy womb was confined him who is beyond all limitation. Because of you the holy Trinity is glorified and adored; the cross is called precious and is venerated throughout the world; the heavens exult; the angels and archangels make merry; demons are put to flight; the devil, that tempter, is thrust down from heaven; the fallen race of man is taken up on high; all creatures possessed by the madness of idolatry have attained knowledge of the truth; believers receive holy baptism; the oil of gladness is poured out; the Church is established throughout the world; pagans are brought to repentance.



What more is there to say? Because of you the light of the only-begotten Son of God has shone upon those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; prophets pronounced the word of God; the apostles preached salvation to the Gentiles; the dead are raised to life, and kings rule by the power of the holy Trinity.

Who can put Mary's high honor into words? She is both mother and virgin. I am overwhelmed by the wonder of this miracle. Of course no one could be prevented from living in the house he had built for himself, yet who would invite mockery by asking his own servant to become his mother?

Behold then the joy of the whole universe. Let the union of God and man in the Son of the Virgin Mary fill us with awe and adoration. Let us fear and worship the undivided Trinity as we sing the praise of the ever-virgin Mary, the holy temple of God, and of God himself, her Son and spotless Bridegroom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

***We hear Mary, the Mother of God referred to in many different ways - Come check out Meredith Gould's - [Many Titles of Mary](#) and discover the many ways to know Our Lady!***

***Want to learn more about Our Lady? Be sure to check out the [Blessed Virgin Mary](#) section of the Crossroads Library.***

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***How Mary and the Rosary Can Change Your Life by: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio***

**Talk 1: The Virgin Mary: Model of Faith**

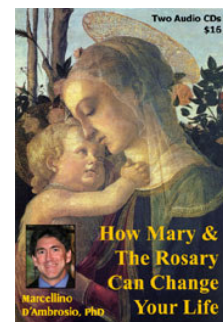
Some Christians seem to neglect her; others seem overly preoccupied with her. What is the true role of Mary in God's plan, her intended role in our lives now, and the proper form of devotion to her? In this talk, Dr. D'Ambrosio provides enlightening and inspiring answers to these questions from Scripture, common sense and the teaching of the Church.

**Talk 2: A Fresh Look at The Rosary**

There is something here for everyone-- those who have problems with the rosary, and those who've read every book on the subject. Drawing from scripture, history, Church teaching and personal experience, Dr. D'Ambrosio shares insights in this talk that will forever change the way you look at and experience this traditional devotion.

[Retail CD - \\$18.00](#)

[Retail Audio Tape - \\$18.00](#)



### [The Everything Mary Book](#)

While Catholics have long admired and honored Mary, other Christian denominations are now devoting special Bible study groups to her as well. The Everything Mary Book explores the often-debated place of Mary in Christianity, as well as her role in the broader world, both secular and religious. With this comprehensive and entertaining biography, you'll unravel the mysteries of one of the Bible's most intriguing and misunderstood women.



### [Scriptural Rosary with Luminous Mysteries -- Rosary Meditation Aid](#)

This pocket sized book includes not only the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries but also **the Luminous Mysteries** proclaimed by our late Holy Father Pope John Paul II. The [Scriptural Rosary](#) combines the Hail Mary's of the rosary with short passages from scripture and is arranged so that **the story of each mystery, or decade, unfolds bead by bead**. As a result, the *Scriptural Rosary* is a stimulating way to **meditate more fruitfully on the mysteries**, which is what the rosary is about. **Perfect for praying the rosary together** as a family or really in any group setting.

