224 Mother (*Mater*)

As it is gathered from the angels’ words in the book *De bone coniugali*,[[1]](#endnote-1) the mother of God can be said four ways. One way as blessed Mary who conceived and gave birth to him, but in this she was more praiseworthy as his mother in the spirit than in the flesh.

Again, the whole Church is called the mother of Christ whose words are witnesses to the Lord. From whence it sucks the milk of the sacraments according to Augustine, *Super canonica Joannis* homily 3.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Again, the preacher or prelate is called the mother of Christ in these whom she has birthed in Christ, Gal. 4[:19]: “My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you.” And Gregory, *Super Evangelio*, book one, homily 8,[[3]](#endnote-3) the mother of God who is made by preaching, if by his voice the love of Christ is also generated in the heart of the neighbor.

Again, the mother of God is said to be the faithful soul doing the will of God, as if forming and begetting Christ in itself, Matt. 12[:50]: “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

¶ The obligation of the parent to the child is first to instruct him and to love him more dearly. Wherefore in Mary the mother and parent she fulfilled the whole obligation so that she was the productrix in natural life, the teacher in the moral school, and the lover by natural affection.

Again, as mother who more amply bestowed in conception, held herself in education more learned, more immeasurably was able in protection, suffered more intensely in his passion, because it is evident that from childhood she was not separated, Matt. 2[:11]: “They found the child with Mary his mother.” Because concerning piety she was not effusive, John 2[:5]: “His mother said to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do it.” Because in credulity he was not decisive, Luke 2[:34-35]: “And Simeon said to Mary his mother … And your own soul a sword shall pierce.”

¶ Again, our mother is said to be the Church, because she is just as a carnal mother. First, she carries and births the child. Second, she bathes and washes it. Third she teaches, cherishes and feeds it. Finally, on the bed with her she makes it rest just as spiritually they are carried to the door of the church, in baptism we are cleansed, by the gift of Christ we are fed and given to drink. Finally, with her after our labors we rest. Therefore, we ought to obey that one like a mother and return to her the things owed to her, such as tithes.

Again, in this name of mother can be noted a title of honor because it is a great honor for a mother to have in common a son with God. Therefore, the son honored the mother in his nativity because he preserved her virginity. In conservation because he was obedient to her, Luc. 2[:51]: “And he was subject to them.” In death because he commended her to John, John 19[:26-27]. After death because he appeared to her first, according to the verses of Sedulius,[[4]](#endnote-4) Arator,[[5]](#endnote-5) and the Cardinal Deacon.[[6]](#endnote-6) After death because he appeared to her first. After the ascension because he led her to glory.

¶ Again, in this name of mother can be noted the sympathy of love. For in Christ are three: flesh, soul, and deity. There was between him and his mother a connection of flesh to flesh according to nature, soul to soul according to friendship, spirit to deity according to grace.

1. Cf. Augustine, *De bono conjugali* 3 and 4 (PL 40:375-376); 26 (PL 40:396); 18 (PL 40:387-388); 2 (PL 40:374-375). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Augustine, *In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* 3.1 (PL 35:1998): Est autem mater Ecclesia; et ubera ejus duo Testamenta Scripturarum divinarum. Hinc sugatur lac omnium sacramentorum temporaliter pro aeterna salute nostra gestorum, ut nutritus atque roboratus perveniat ad manducandum cibum, quod est, In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum (Joan. I, 1). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gregory, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia* 3.2 (PL 76:1086): quia qui Christi frater et soror est, credendo, mater efficitur praedicando. Quasi enim parit Dominum, quem cordi audientis infuderit. Et mater ejus efficitur, si per ejus vocem amor Domini in proximi mente generatur. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Sedulius, *The Paschal Song and Hymns* Book 5.359-364, trans. Carl P. E. Springer (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), p. 161: She is shining with the illustrious glory of Mary, Who, even while always a mother endowed with that famous title, Always remains a virgin too. Before her eyes the Lord first stood And presented himself openly in the light, so that his good mother, Spreading abroad the news of his great miracles, the one who was The way by which he once came to us, might also signal his return. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Arator, *De Actibus Apostolorum* 2.297-306 (PL 68:190-191): Virgineum promittit opus; haec namque propago

Divinum concepit iter; hinc sacra Maria est

[Col.0190C] Ad partum generata novum, quae, conjugis expers,

[300] [Col.0191A] Mater inest, natusque Dei de Virginis alvo

Emicat, atque hominem mediator in omnia complet,

Hinc terrena levans, illic coelestia praestans.

Praeterit ergo vetus, Christo nascente, figura.

Haec facies jus omne novat, cultroque fugato,

[305] Spiritus ardescens cor circumcidit in undis,

Qui sanantur aquis, ne figant vulnera membris. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Cardinal Deacon, this reference may refer back to Arator. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)