

Homily 4th Sunday Advent Yr A: Mary's 3-Fold Virginity

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“The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel”
(Is. 7:14).

These are the words that the great Prophet Isaiah spoke to King Ahaz more than 700 years before the Birth of Christ – a prophecy that was fulfilled with the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Mary, a virgin, would conceive and give birth to Jesus, the Eternal Son of God who became man – who is called Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.”

We know from St. Luke’s Gospel, in his account of the Annunciation, that Mary conceived Jesus as a virgin: *“The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to the town of Galilee, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary”* (Lk. 1:26).

Why did God arrange that Mary be a virgin in conceiving Jesus? Why is her virginity important in regard to conceiving and giving birth to Jesus?

Pope St. John Paul II, in a discourse on Mary’s virginity on May 24, 1992, said:

“Reading through the writings of the holy Fathers [the great Saints of antiquity] . . . we notice that few of the saving mysteries have caused so much amazement, admiration or praise as the Incarnation of God’s Son in Mary’s virginal womb. . . . They observed that the virginity of the mother is a requirement flowing from the divine nature of the Son; the concrete condition in which, according to a free and wise divine plan, the Incarnation of the eternal Son took place.”

In other words, it was *most fitting* that the Son of God, when He became man, should take flesh in a woman of singular virtue and sanctity – this is also why Mary was conceived without sin: to be a sinless vessel, without spot.

As Msgr. Arthur Calkins says: “For the Fathers, the BVM is the *terra virgo* – the virgin earth from which emerged the Son of God. Her fruitful virginity cannot be separated from the blessed fruit of which it is a sign. . . Catholic

Tradition always witnesses to an indissoluble link between Mary's virginity and the Incarnation of the Word."

The prophecy of Isaiah to King Ahaz also reveals another aspect of this mystery that is not all that well known: In **giving birth** to Jesus, Mary's virginity remained intact. "*The virgin shall conceive and bear a son.*"

In the process of giving birth, Mary remained a virgin.

What does this mean? It means that Mary gave birth to Jesus in a miraculous way; that her body suffered no physical injury, no rupture of any bodily part, in giving birth to the Savior God made man.

Why is this so? Well, it is *fitting* that the Mother of God, the Word made flesh, in giving birth to the Savior, should not experience any physical injury or pangs of childbirth. These were a consequence of Original Sin, and Mary, in addition to being the Mother of God, was conceived without Original Sin.

The Church has always taught this truth about Mary. The CCC 499 teaches: "Christ's birth 'did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it' (LG 57), and so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the 'Ever-virgin.'"

Yes, as we profess in the *Confiteor* at Mass, and as the priest says during the First Eucharistic Prayer (the Roman Canon): Mary is "ever Virgin."

This title "ever-virgin" also means that Mary remained a virgin *forever* after having given birth to Jesus.

The First Lateran Council (649 A.D.), presided over by Pope St. Martin I, teaches that anyone who denies that Mary is a virgin in conceiving Jesus, in giving birth to Him, and for ever after: "let him be condemned."

Is there biblical evidence for Mary being "ever-Virgin", i.e., remaining a virgin after giving birth to Jesus? Yes, but first, we need to answer a common objection by Protestants.

Protestants look to the references in the Gospels to Jesus's "brothers and sisters" to justify saying that the Virgin Mary had other children.

How do we respond?

First of all, the term “brother” or “sister” was used among the Hebrews refer to close relations, one’s kin.

For example, in the book of Genesis we see that Abraham’s nephew, Lot, is called his “brother” (Gen. 13:8; 14:16 – see *Douay-Rheims* transl.; other English Bibles use the word “kinsman”). And we know that two men, James and Joseph, who are called “brothers” of Jesus in the Gospels (Mt. 13:55) – were in fact sons of another woman named Mary (Mt. 27:56; cf. 28:1).

As Pope John Paul II taught (Aug. 28, 1996): “it should be recalled that no specific term exists in Hebrew and Aramaic to express the word ‘cousin,’ and that the term ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ therefore included several degrees of relationship. The phrase ‘brothers of Jesus’ indicates the children of a Mary who was a disciple of Christ (Mt. 27:56) and who is significantly described as ‘the other Mary’ (Mt. 28:1).”

Here’s another significant fact: Both Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli – founding fathers of Protestantism - held for Mary’s perpetual virginity! So, modern-day Protestants are ignorant of what the founders of Protestantism themselves believed and taught.

So, what biblical evidence do we have for Mary remaining a virgin after giving birth to Jesus? We have Mary’s own words at the Annunciation (Luke ch. 1).

When the Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and bear a son who will reign on the throne of David forever, Mary objects and says, “*How can this be, since I do not know man?*”

These words of Mary revealed that she never intended to “know” Joseph in an intimate manner; to have marital relations with him. Otherwise, Mary’s words make no sense.

Just think about it: If you’re a young woman engaged to be married, and an angel tells you that you will conceive and bear a son, what you would naturally think? That after and your husband are married, you will have relations, and bear a son.

But Mary objects and says, “*How can this be? I do not know man.*” These words reveal that Mary never intended to have marital relations with Joseph;

rather, that she intended to remain a virgin. But she was open to do whatever God wanted.

The Archangel Gabriel assured her she would not have to renounce her vow of virginity: “*The Holy Spirit will overshadow you*” – she will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary then utters her “*Fiat*” – “*Let it be done to me according to your word.*”

As St. JPII taught (July 24, 1996): “[B]y voluntary choice [Mary] intended to remain a virgin. Therefore, her intention of virginity appeared to be an obstacle to the motherhood announced to her. The phrases ‘How can this be’ and ‘since I do not know man’ emphasize both Mary’s present virginity and her intention to remain a virgin. The expression she used, with the verb in the present tense, reveals the permanence and continuity of her state.”

JPII goes on to relate Mary’s “fullness of grace” (Lk. 1:28) with her desire to remain a virgin: “Mary received a wondrous grace. The unique privilege of the Immaculate Conception influences the whole development of the young women of Nazareth’s spiritual life. Thus, Mary was guided to the ideal of virginity by in exceptional inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

Yes, Mary’s vow of virginity is an expression of her total consecration, her complete dedication, to God and His divine will.

Now, what about St. Joseph? We believe that he agreed to take Mary as his wife knowing that she had taken a vow of virginity. He was going to be truly her husband, and Mary would truly be his wife; but it would be a virginal marriage, never consummated (in this unique circumstance, to fulfill God’s plan).

Joseph would be her provider and protector, and also would be the guardian and foster-father of Jesus. God had arranged things this way, to safeguard against any scandal after Mary gives birth to Jesus.

Our Catholic tradition also holds that Joseph was a virgin as well – the reason he is portrayed in artwork holding a white lily – for purity.

In a catechesis on these topics (8/21/96), Pope St. John Paul II first speaks of Mary’s determination to remain a virgin and of her virginal marriage to Joseph.

He points out that the Jewish marriage custom consisted of two parts; first, the betrothal, which was a legal contract, and then the completion when the man took the woman to his home.

JPII says: “We can wonder why Mary would accept betrothal, since she had the intention of remaining a virgin forever. . . . It may be presumed that at the time of their betrothal there was an understanding between Joseph and Mary about the plan to live as a virgin. Moreover, the Holy Spirit, who had inspired Mary to choose virginity in view of the mystery of the Incarnation, and who wanted the latter to come about in a family setting suited to the child’s growth, was quite able to instill in Joseph the ideal of virginity as well.”

In Matthew’s Gospel, we read how Joseph, upon learning that his betrothed, Mary, was with child, decided to “divorce her quietly.” Why? Some think he was scandalized. But the better interpretation, in keeping with the great saints and devotees to St. Joseph since the Middle Ages, is that Joseph planned to divorce Mary out of reverential fear; that he somehow learned that Mary was carrying the Son of God and he felt unworthy to undertake the responsibility of being Mary’s husband and the foster-father of the Word made flesh. This explains why the Archangel Gabriel assured Joseph with the words, “*Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife*” (Mt. 1:20).

Now, having spoken about the true and virginal marriage of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, I would be remiss if I neglected to mention the assault on marriage and the family which took place in our country this past week.

President Joseph Biden signed into law a bill called the Respect for Marriage Act. This new law - which is the law of the land throughout the United States – really has nothing to do with authentic marriage as instituted by God at the beginning of the human race, between man and woman.

It not only permits people of the same sex to “marry” but forces all the States in our nation to recognize the fantasy of what is called same-sex marriage.

And legal experts say that businesses, and institutions such as the Catholic Church, may now be targeted by the government for refusing to go along with this law. The Church could lose its tax-exempt status (which may not be all

that bad – maybe Catholics would finally wake up and stop voting for people who are undermining the common good, which is precisely what this law does by attacking the fundamental unit of society, the family). People who own businesses, or various professionals (lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc.) may be open to lawsuits for refusing to go along with same sex “marriage.”

The day may come soon when people may be denied entry into professions such as law, medicine, teaching, for refusing to assent to “gay marriage.” Priests who refuse to perform “wedding” ceremonies may be sued. I could see priests, and others, going to prison, or “re-education” camps, for refusing to go along with this evil agenda.

And make no mistake about it: This is evil. It is an agenda straight out of Hell. This new law tries to force us to accept, and celebrate as something good, homosexual sodomy. I’ll say that I am willing to shed my blood to defend the teaching of Christ on marriage.

Before she died, Sister Lucia, the last Fatima seer, said that Satan’s final attack will be against the family. My friends, we are seeing this happen before our very eyes.

When signing the bill into law last Tuesday, President Biden insulted all of us who believe and hold to the notion of Christian marriage. He said that anyone who disagrees with this new law is guilty of (and I quote here his words) “racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, trans-phobia, they’re all connected.”

So, by Biden’s logic, if you believe that traditional marriage should not be undermined and that people of the same sex cannot be married, you are evil.

Shame on President Biden. Shame on all those U.S. senators and congressmen who voted for this evil bill. All the Democrats did, but many Republicans did as well.

God instituted marriage to make a man and woman one flesh, in a union that is ordered towards procreation education of children.

We must pray for our president, pray for our Congress. We must pray for our country. The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!