

## The Incarnation Feast March 25

The Incarnation! Surely the greatest event that has taken place, or will take place, in human history. It is commemorated and celebrated in the Church each year with a feast on March 25 (nine months before Christmas), but not with anything like the solemnity of Christmas (the birth of Christ) or Easter (the Resurrection of Christ). Yet, if there had been no Incarnation there would have been no Christmas, no Easter, no redemption through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the Incarnation? St. John, at the beginning of his gospel says, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God. ....The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us..." (*Cf. Jn 1:1 seq.*) The Word becoming flesh was the Incarnation. In his Letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul, apparently quoting a hymn known to the Catholics of Philippi, wrote of Christ, "Though he was in the form of God he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate." (*Phil 2:6-7*) Before he was born he was, of course, conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. That was the Incarnation.

In the Apostle's Creed we profess our belief in the Incarnation: "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit ....."

The mystery of the Incarnation is that at a point in human history - "the fullness of time"- the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) formed a human nature (i.e. created a human soul and infused it into a human body) in the womb of the Virgin Mary and united it to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. That was the Incarnation. Immediately, and now eternally, there is the wondrous, singular, mysterious union of the created human nature with the eternal divine nature of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. (*Cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, p. 413*) The Incarnation took place at the moment of the response of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the angel Gabriel; "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." (*Lk 1:38*) At that moment in time Jesus, eternally true God, became true Man. He is God - Man. Because she is mother of God Incarnate the Blessed Virgin Mary is "Mother of God."