

The Veneration of the Blessed Mary

The Church honors the Blessed Virgin Mary most of all the saints. She is venerated especially for her supreme grace and the call she received from God. It is believed that by the grace of God she committed no actual sin. St. Elisabeth cried and said: "Blessed art thou above all women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb . . ." (Luke 1, 39, 45). St. Gabriel said to her: "Be joyful, O thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou above all women" (Luke 1-28). So we, receiving and believing these words of the Gospel, honor and praise her as the mother of our Lord, our Lady, a lady blessed, holy, exalted, honored, and praised.

The Virgin Mother of God in Ethiopian Cult

The Virgin Mother of God has a very special place in the Ethiopian cult, and devotion to our Mother holds the highest place. Ethiopia is known as the country of Mary, her protectress. Among the saints in heaven, she is venerated in a special way. She is loved by her Son so dearly that He will grant her every prayer. Because of the mission she received from God, her life is most closely linked with the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and there is no one who has followed in the footsteps of the Incarnate Word more closely and with more merit than she; and no one has more grace and power over the heart of the Son of God, and through Him with the Heavenly Father. Holier than the Cherubim and Seraphim, she enjoys unquestionably greater glory than all the other saints for she is full of grace, she is the Mother of God, who happily gave birth to the Redeemer for us.

She is a glorified human soul, more perfect and more lovable than any other. She is worthy of the highest place and the most exalted honor that a creature can attain to in heaven, for through God's choosing of her for the destiny of being His Mother, through the abundance of grace which He bestowed upon her, and through her fidelity in corresponding with this grace, she has reached a degree of glory which places her higher than God's angels or His other Saints.

Liturgical References and Prayers

The Blessed Virgin Mary is constantly referred to in the Liturgy. Special prayer to her in the form of Ave Maria or Hail Mary is recited during the Liturgy immediately before the Lectings:

Hail, O Mary, full of grace,

The Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women,

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Pray and intercede for us with thy beloved Son,

That he forgives our sins.

Very moving is the prayer of the priest after the reading of the Acts of Apostles. Here it is:

"Rejoice, O thou of whom we ask healing, O Holy, full of honor, ever-virgin, parent of God, mother of Christ, offer up our prayer on high to thy beloved Son that he may forgive us our sins.

"Rejoice, O thou who didst bear for us the Very light of Righteousness, even Christ our God. O Virgin pure, plead for us unto our Lord that he may have mercy upon our souls and forgive us our sins.

"Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, very Queen; rejoice, O pride of our kind; rejoice O thou that barest for us Emmanuel our God. We ask thee to remember us, O true Mediatrix, before our Lord Jesus Christ that he may have mercy upon our souls and forgive us our sins."

Feasts, Homilies, and Devotional Practices

Our Lady is commemorated every month, and there are more than thirty feasts of Mary in one year. The name of Mary is the most popular, both for men and women. Innumerable churches are erected in her honor. The Nagara Maryam, or History of Mary, is a collection of stories about her life arranged for the twelve months of the year. There are two collections of homilies to be read on the Festivals of the Virgin, arranged for the different days of the week: the Praises of Mary (Weddase Maryam) and the Organ of the Virgin or Organ of Praises (Arganona Dengel, Arganona Weddase). One of the Anaphoras is called "Of our Lady Mary". Plenty of pictures of the Virgin are to be seen in the churches and sleeping places. Another important book we have in connection with the Mother of God is called the Wonders of Mary. Ethiopia is a daughter of Mary, her star in peace and war, and her last resort in everything. Nothing can be

taught to the Church in devotion and honor to the Blessed Virgin. Finally, the Church teaches that our Lady was taken to Heaven soul and body where she prays for us until the last Judgement.