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Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant

Recently, you may have heard me speak about Our Lady as the Ark of the New Covenant. Some may wonder why the Mother of God is the Ark of the New Covenant. Answering that question begins with the Scripture. The Scriptural references which most clearly point to Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant are the account of the Visitation in the Gospel According to Luke and the Woman of the Book of Revelation.

In the account of the Visitation (Luke 1:39-45), Mary visits Elizabeth, and Elizabeth exclaims, “How is it that the Mother of my Lord comes to me?” This is very reminiscent of the time when the Ark of the (Old) Covenant was on its way to Jerusalem (1 Samuel 6:1-9), and King David exclaimed, “How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?” Many in the Church have noticed this parallel and realized that Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant.

Another indication that Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant is in the Book of Revelation. At the end of chapter 11 (11:19), St. John sees the heavens open, and he sees God’s temple open, and he sees the Ark of the Covenant there. Immediately afterward, he sees the Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and twelve stars on her head (12:1). The proximity of the Woman with the Ark could be another indicator.

But why would Mary be the Ark of the New Covenant? The Ark of the Old Covenant was the box or vessel which contained the two stone tablets on which were written the Commandments and the Law. The Ark of the Old Covenant was either present in battle or rested in Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem. It was a kind of physical embodiment of the Old Covenant.

Usually when we think of the Old Covenant, we think of Moses on the mountain receiving the Law from God, which is true. What is the New Covenant? We usually think of the New Covenant as the Lord Jesus making His Sacrifice upon the Cross. The Eucharist is tied into that, because the Last Supper is the memorial of His Sacrifice. None of that is false, but there is more to the New Covenant.

The Old Covenant that God made with the people through Moses was later described in terms of a marriage, a marriage between God (the Bridegroom) and Israel (the Bride). This is true, because a marriage is not just a contract between two parties, as if they are just conducting a business transaction. No, God established the Old Covenant because of His love for His people. So, in the prophets like Isaiah and Hosea, the image of a marriage is appropriate.

The New Covenant is more than just a kind of contract between the Lord Jesus and us. The image of a Bride is applied to the Church. Anyway, the New Covenant did not just start with the Last Supper and the Lord's Death. The New Covenant goes all the way back to when the Lord Jesus first came down from Heaven. In the Gospel According to John, the New Covenant can be recognized when the Word of God came among us.

The New Covenant is about a marriage, of sorts, between God and humanity. The New Covenant is a union between God and humanity. We call this union the Hypostatic Union; Hypostasis being a word for Person. It means that the One Divine Person, the Lord Jesus, already possessing divinity in its fullness, added our humanity to Himself. Divine nature and human nature are indissolubly united in the Lord Jesus, without any confusion between them.

The time when the Lord Jesus first revealed Himself was the Wedding Feast at Cana. That was when He revealed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. Who was there at the Wedding Feast at Cana with Him? Mary. She was also there when the Lord brought the New Covenant to completion, whenever He died upon the Cross. Mary is an important part of the New Covenant.

Only she has a direct physical bond with the Lord's humanity. She cannot lose that bond that she has with Him as His Mother. In a sense, just as the Ark of the Old Covenant was an embodiment of the Old Covenant, and it carried another embodiment of the Old Covenant, namely the two stone tablets, so Mary carries within her a connection to the Lord's humanity. Whenever we come to Mass, and the Lord Jesus is present with us, we can be sure that the Mother of the Lord is with us too.

The Ark of the Old Covenant was a kind of throne, upon which the Lord rested. The Israelites carried the Ark from Mt. Sinai to the promised land; they also carried the Ark into battle; finally, the Ark was usually located in the holiest part of the Temple, and God dwelt there. Just as the Ark of the Old Covenant was where the Lord dwelt on earth, so the Ark of the New Covenant was where the Son of God began His dwelling on earth.

What does this mean for us? We can be sure that whenever we look to Mary, we will find the Lord Jesus. Her bond with Him cannot be broken, and when we look to her, she will always bring us to the Lord. Our bond with the Lord Jesus cannot be quite the same as hers, but we ask her to strengthen the friendship that we have with the Lord Jesus, so that nothing can separate us from His love.