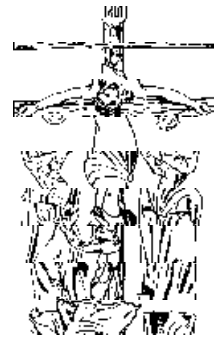




# Mary ~~

## An active participant in Christ's Passion

Paul Lee



When Gibson's stunning film, *The Passion of Christ*, aroused the interest of millions of Christians and non-Christians around the world to spend nearly two hours in the cinemas, it also received criticism from the protestant churches on the 'deliberation' of highlighting the role of Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, in the History of Salvation. Lots of newspaper articles, critics and daily received emails fired at the director's pro-Catholic Catechism, especially on the portrayal of Mary's involvement in Christ's passion. As a Catholic, I am not going to counteract those negative criticism toward Mary, but according to my faith, I should ascertain and understand the unreplaceable position of Mary in Salvation and in the early Church.



Catholics recognize Mary's obedience to God and thus she is "full of grace" as Gabriel called her. She is full of the life of God and is therefore able to confront the devil, not only during the Passion, but for our sake as well, now that she is glorified in heaven. The angel Gabriel appeared to her when she was a teenager, announcing God's will that she becomes the Mother of the Messiah. Her "Yes" to God brought the world the gift of salvation - the Incarnate Son of God, Jesus.

In this film, the director featured Mary's humanity and Jesus divinity. The daily life mother and child interaction between Mother and Jesus helps us reflect on the marvelous fact that Jesus lived with His mother for His first thirty years. He laughed and joked with His mother, as illustrated by the scene in which they splashed water at each other. Seeing Mary's very normal motherly interaction with Jesus also brings home the depth of pain she must have experienced in witnessing His Passion.

According to the Bible, Mary was present at some of Jesus' miracles. She also helped launch Jesus' public ministry by requesting that He provided wine for the presumably embarrassed hosts at Cana wedding (*John 2*). It was known as well that Mary accompanied Jesus on his walk to Golgotha where He was crucified. Scripture also has her standing with Mary Magdalene and St. John at the foot of the cross.

Catholics honor Mary and recognize her as the greatest of all the saints. She is regarded as the new "Ark of the Covenant", the vessel from God chose to carry His Son, and is therefore worthy of great respect and devotion. Because of her special closeness to God, Catholics ask for special intercession to God on our behalf. This is in large part why devotion to Mary is so important to our spiritual lives.

In the film, there was a scene in which Mary entered a place and found Jesus chained to the ceiling below the stone pavement. We can imagine that the director aimed at portraying in this image the eternal connection between Jesus and His mother. Jesus, the Messiah and Mary, who abandoned herself to God's will from Jesus' birth to death, are permanently connected.



(With reference to *A Guide to the Passion*, Catholic Exchange & Ascension Press)