

## At the Council of Ephesus, 431

The heresy of Nestorius which posited a double personality, a divine and a human, in Christ, found its greatest opponent in St. Cyril of Alexandria. It was the latter's dogmatic letter to the heresiarch Nestorius that the Council of Ephesus, the third ecumenical council, adopted as an expression of orthodox Catholic belief when it met in its first session on July 22, 431. Since the God-man was one Divine Person, his mother could rightly be called the *Mother of God*. This appellation of the Virgin Mary had become a focal point of the dispute between Nestorius's followers and the Catholics.

For we do not say that the nature of the Word  
became man by undergoing change;  
nor that it was transformed into a complete man  
consisting of soul and body.

What we say, rather; is that  
by uniting to himself in his own person  
a body animated by a rational soul,  
the Word has become man  
in an inexpressible and incomprehensible way  
and has been called the Son of man;  
not merely according to will or complacency,  
but not by merely assuming a person either.

And we say that the natures that are brought together  
into true unity are different;  
still, from both there is one, Christ and Son;  
not as though the difference between the natures  
were taken away by their union,  
but rather both divinity and humanity  
produce the perfection of our one Lord, Christ and Son,  
by their inexpressible and mysterious joining into unity....

It was not that first an ordinary human being  
was born of the holy Virgin  
and then the Word descended upon that man;  
but in virtue of the union  
he is said to have undergone birth  
according to the flesh from his mother's womb,  
since he claims as his own birth,  
the generation of his own flesh...

Thus we have not hesitated to call the Holy Virgin Mother of God.