

Reason behind Missal

Regarding recent discussion of the new Missal, specifically the Nicene Creed (CR, Sept. 30 and Oct. 7): Indeed, why say that the Son of God became 'incarnate' - took flesh - of the Virgin Mary, rather than (more simply and vaguely) "born of" her? Simply, the difference is indeed that important. It points back to one of the first questions the church had to settle in council, at Ephesus in 431: was Mary the Mother of God, with all that that implies, or only the mother of the man Jesus? The church declared the former to be true, and it is for that reason that "incarnate" is there in the Latin; it is there in the Greek; it is there in the English translation in use in the Eastern Churches.

There and elsewhere in the Creed, we are assenting not only to the single summary phrase but to the entire body of Scripture and tradition that lies behind it. If something trips us up, so much the better: our attention is caught and an opportunity to grow in knowledge of our faith presents itself. As is said of the Creed at baptisms: "This is our Faith. This is the Faith of the Church, and we are proud to profess it." We should be proud enough to be willing to humble ourselves and to seek to learn.