

The *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* began as a BBC radio comedy broadcast in 1978. It was a series created by Douglas Adams, and became a trilogy in five parts published as books from 1979 through 1992.

It follows the misadventures of a displaced Englishman named Arthur Dent who finds himself on board a UFO bound for the reaches of the Universe.

During his travels through space and time, Arthur discovers the planet-sized computer named *Deep Thought* whose sole purpose is to calculate the "Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything." The answer, by the way, is 42. (Don't ask me why.)

Needless to say, the books and radio show were immensely popular albeit irreverent, humorous, and oftentimes just plain silly.

Today is the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. And while this may seem to be quite apparent to us living in the 21st century, nearly 1,600 years ago in Turkey ... there was a Church council that set out to resolve the "Mother of God" crisis.

The crisis was one of metaphysics. Metaphysics being the area of philosophy that deals with the fundamental nature of being and creation. And while those things are not so easily defined, back in 431 AD, things had reached a fever-pitch over the definitions of essence, being, and nature ... especially in how they referred to Jesus Christ, the Incarnation, and His relationship with us and with humanity.

As theologians and philosophers often tend to do, there were several schools of thought. Was Jesus God and man? Or part God and part man? Wholly God and wholly man? What parts were which? How much was divine? How much was human?

This boiled down to a controversy over who Mary was in relation to Jesus. Was she really his mother? And what parts of him was she mother of?

As a side-bar, I'm certain that parents can relate to this. When a child misbehaves – whose side of the family is it taking after? Or when a child succeeds, which side of the family does it favor?

In a similar way, theologians and philosophers were arguing and eventually the Church and government got involved. A council was held. Charges of heresy were tossed around. And in the end, what we take for granted 1,600 years later was agreed to.

Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human ... eternally begotten ... incarnate of the Virgin Mary ... consubstantial with the Father. And Mary is His mother, and therefore: she is the Mother of God.

And so, we celebrate today's feast. Because as any theology student will tell you: when you get things right about Mary, you get things right about Jesus. Another way to say this is: good Mariology is good Christology.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray for a docility to the Truth as it is manifested in doctrine and dogma. May we, like Mary, "*[keep] all these things, reflecting on them in [our] heart[s].*"

May the Eucharist we receive today sustain us in Faith, Hope, and Love ... and may the graces we receive today sustain us as we embark on the New Year.