

Mary, the Mother of God

As we discuss Mary we must realize that she was a true person in history.

To gain a full understanding of Mary we must look at her from several different perspectives:

History

Tradition

Scripture

Faith



Why isn't more written about Mary?

She lived in a small farming community in Galilee

- Nazareth was of little consequence to most Jews
- The town is never mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures
- John 1:46: "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*"

She was not wealthy or influential

Lived in a society under Roman rule

- Patriarchal society in a patriarchal empire

Emphasis of the evangelists was to tell the story of Jesus,
not Mary

Mary's Birth

- Born to Joachim and Anne
- Joachim belonged to the royal family of David
- Anne was a descendant from the priestly family of Aaron

Christ the Eternal King and Priest came from both kingly and priestly family lines

The Historical Mary

- Much of what is known about the Historical Mary comes from tradition and non-canonical sources
- Protoevangelium of James (125-145AD)
- Early Church Fathers

Marriage to Joseph

- According to Jewish custom, the union between Joseph and Mary had to be arranged by the parents of St. Joseph.
- As she had obeyed God's inspiration in making her vow, so she obeyed God's inspiration in becoming the bride of Joseph.
- Mary trusted the Divine guidance implicitly, and thus was certain that her vow would be kept even in her married state.

Presentation in Temple

- Joachim and Anne, faithful to a vow they had made, presented the child Mary in the Temple when she was three years old
- Vow of Perpetual Virginity
- Mary remained in the Temple after her presentation in order to be educated with other Jewish children
- The house of Joachim and Anna was not far from the Temple, it is possible that the holy child Mary was often allowed to visit the sacred buildings in order to satisfy her devotion.
- Church has remained silent on this issue

Where Did Mary Live?

- Probably lived in or near Jerusalem during her youth
- After her marriage to Joseph moved to Nazareth
- May have lived with John in Ephesus temporarily
- She would have died (or been Assumed) before John's exile to Patmos (probably in Jerusalem)

The Historical Mary

- Mary was born during the reign of Herod the Great
- Mary, like her son Jesus, spoke Aramaic but she would have also been exposed to Latin (Roman occupiers), Hebrew (synagogues) and Greek (language of commerce)
- Most Jews lived as members of an extended family (as did Mary most likely)
- Most women of her day married around the age of thirteen

The Mary of History

Picture of the Holy Family as a tiny group of three living in a tranquil carpenter's shop is improbable

Worked 10 hours a day on domestic chores

Not fragile as often depicted...robust

Not as depicted in common art. Like most Jewish and Palestinian women today dark hair and dark eyes

Most likely could not read or write... highly oral culture

After Pentecost, Mary disappears from History

Mary's Death

- 48 AD - Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, Apollonius
- She would have been in her 50 - 60's
- Dormition Abbey

The Mary of Scripture



The four evangelists show Mary in 4 different ways

- Each was writing for a particular audience
- Each was trying to convey particular ideas about God and Jesus

Mary of History



The historical Mary experienced poverty, oppression, violence and the execution of her only son.

Her faith is deeply rooted in that context.

Before the omnipotent God, she recognizes her own “lowly estate.” She is not among the world’s powerful. She is simply God’s “maidservant.”

But she believes that nothing is impossible for God. In the Magnificat she sings confidently that God rescues life from death, joy from sorrow, light from darkness.

Mary in the Gospel of Luke

Luke's gospel contains stories not found in the other gospels. In Luke's gospel, the references to Mary are:

- 1:26-38, the Annunciation
- 1:39-56, Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth
- 2:1-7, the birth of Mary's son Jesus
- 2:21-38, Mary takes Jesus to the Temple
- 2:41-52, Mary and Joseph lose Jesus during a visit to Jerusalem
- 4:16-30, Jesus is rejected at Nazareth
- 8:19-21, the family of Jesus visit him during his ministry.

Mary in the Gospel of Mark

Mark 3:31-35 the family of Jesus visit him

'A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you".'

Mark 6:1-6 Jesus is rejected by Nazareth

Mary is shown as the leader of the family of Jesus, confident and loving.

The members of Jesus' family did not understand his purpose, but were concerned about his welfare.

Mary in the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew's Gospel contains several stories not found in the other gospels.

In Matthew's Gospel, the references to Mary are:

- 1:18-25, the birth of Mary's son Jesus
- 2:1-12: The Visitation of the Magi (“...and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage.”)
- 2:13-21, Mary, Joseph and Jesus flee to Egypt
- 12:46-50, the family of Jesus visit him during his ministry
- 13:53-58, Jesus is rejected at Nazareth

Luke



In the gospel written by Luke, Mary was a model of what a follower of Jesus ought to be: she had faith in God, she thought deeply about what was happening to her, and she co-operated with God, holding nothing back.

She was also a very human figure, experiencing distress and joy as she watched over her child.

Matthew

In the gospel written by Matthew, the story of Jesus' birth is told from Joseph's point of view, not Mary's.

The story is preceded by a genealogy, in which Joseph is named as the legal father of Jesus.

In the Jewish world, a genealogy established social position and religious identity.

It shows a difference in approach between Luke's and Matthew's accounts.

In Matthew's gospel, Mary was in a vulnerable position because her culture emphasized family honor. Her pregnancy could bring dishonor to her whole family.

The Scriptural Mary

In the Christian Scriptures Mary is mentioned not only in the Gospels but also other books of Christian Scripture

In the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:13-14) Mary is shown as a mature woman who devoted herself to prayer within the early Christian community.

She thus lived out the Jewish ideal of holiness. Jews believe that holiness is found in active participation in the life of the community. Holy people do not avoid the company of others. They share the happiness and sadness of the people around them, because they believe that God is found in humanity, not in isolation.

Mary is shown within a community, focused on God

Mary in the Gospel of John

John's gospel contains stories not found in the other gospels. The references to Mary in John's gospel are:

- 2:1-11, Mary and Jesus attended a wedding at Cana
- 19:25-27, Mary witnessed the crucifixion of her son.
- The Gospel of John developed complex ideas about Jesus: who he was, and how this was evident in his life. The emphasis was on the divinity of Jesus, with not many stories about Mary. But the stories we have show a woman who was sure of herself, and confident about her place in the community.

New Testament

- Acts 1:12-14
All those devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus...
- Galatians 4:4
But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman...
- Revelation 12: 1-2
*A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet...
She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth*



Old Testament Prophecies of Mary

- 1st Prophecy: Genesis 3:15

- *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel.”*

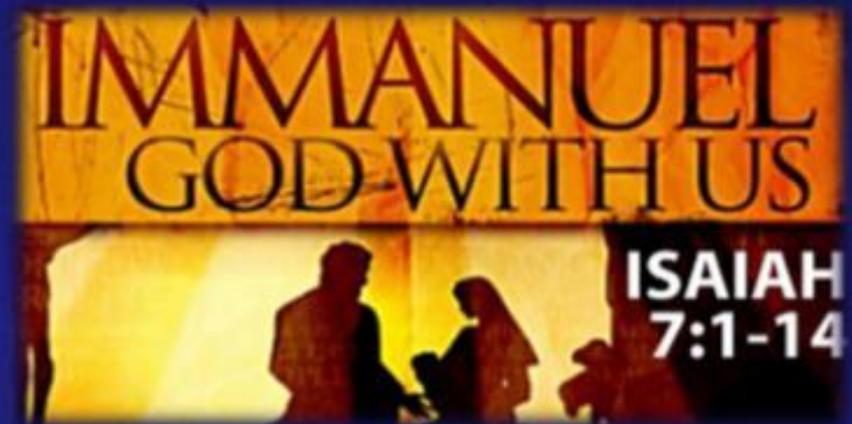


3rd Prophecy of Mary

- Micah 5: 2-3
- *“But you Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small to be among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth ... one who is to be ruler of Israel...”*
- *“Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne...”*

2nd Prophecy of Mary

- Isaiah 7: 14
- *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.”*



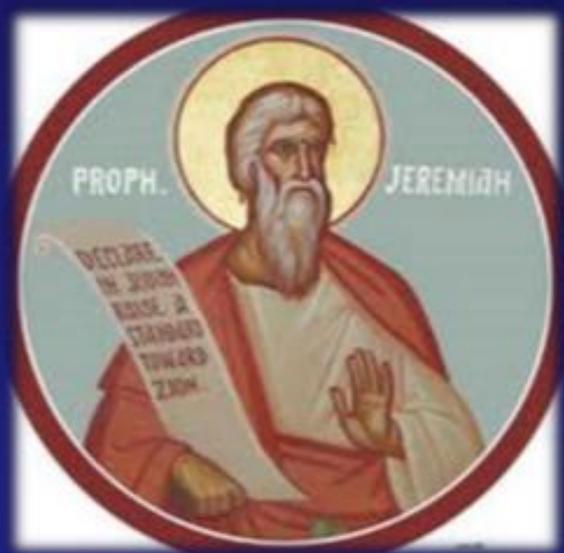
Unlikely Sources

- Quran
- Protestant reformers
 - Martin Luther
 - John Calvin
 - Ulrich Zwingli



4th Prophecy of Mary

- Jeremiah 31:22
- *“The Lord has created a new thing upon the earth; the woman must encompass the man with devotion...”*



Quran continued

- *"Behold! The angels said, 'Oh Mary! God has chosen you and purified you, chosen you above the women of all nations. Oh Mary! Worship your Lord devoutly. Prostrate yourself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down'" (3:42-43).*
- *"And (remember) she who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples (21:91).*
- *And Mary, the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity. And We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit. She testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants)" (66:12).*

Quran

- The Quran speaks of Mary (called *Miriam in Arabic*) not only as the mother of Jesus, but as a righteous woman in her own right
- Quran devotes a whole chapter to Mary (Chapter 19)
- Angel to Mary: *"I am only a messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a holy son." She said, 'How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?' He said, 'So (it will be). Your Lord says, 'That is easy for Me, and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men, and a Mercy from Us. It is a matter (so) decreed'"* (19:16-21, the Chapter of Mary)

The Mary of Faith



What do Catholics Believe about Mary?

- God chose Mary, a virgin, to be the Mother of God
- We do not hold Mary to be divine
- We do NOT worship Mary.
Worship is withheld for God and God alone
- Mary is subordinate to Jesus but is above all creatures
- We honor Mary because Mary was honored by God and to her a special grace was bestowed (see Luke 1:28)

Marian Dogma

- Divine Motherhood
- Perpetual Virginity
- Immaculate Conception
- The Assumption



Divine Motherhood

Various titles:

- Mother of God
- Theotokos (Greek):
 - God bearer
 - Birth-giver of God



Theotokos

Council of Ephesus 431 AD

Responded to the Nestorian Heresy

Nestorius Patriarch of Constantinople

Mary was Christotokos not Theotokos

Stated Mary gave birth to the Human aspect of Jesus
but Not the Divine

Nestorius was in essence denying the Hypostatic Union of
Jesus' two natures, God/man; Divine/Human, in One
Person

Theotokos



Dogma was further explained at the Council of Chalcedon
451 AD:

*"...begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his godhead,
...because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the
Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, as regards his manhood; one and the
same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten..."*

Mary Ever-Virgin



Theotokos

- Mary is not responsible for the Divinity of Jesus
- Jesus was eternally begotten of God the Father
- Theotokos refers to the Incarnation, when the Second Person of the Holy Trinity took on human nature in addition to his pre-existing divine nature, this being made possible through the cooperation of Mary.

Perpetual Virginity

- The early baptismal formulae (since the 3rd century) state Mary's virginity
- Council of the Lateran, 649 AD: Mary conceived "without any detriment to her virginity, which remained inviolate even after his birth"
- The Catholic Church holds as dogma that Mary was and is Virgin before, in, and after Christ's birth.

Mary “Ever-Virgin”

The early Church held that Mary had but one child, Jesus

Their belief stemmed from witness and tradition

This truth is found in the writings of the early Church fathers.

In the days of St. Augustine, those who denied the virginity of Mary were labeled Heretics

Perpetual Virginity

- Vatican II reiterated the teaching about Mary, the Ever-Virgin, by stating that Christ's birth did not diminish Mary's virginal integrity but sanctified it
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church (499-507) maintains that Jesus Christ was Mary's only child. The so-called "brothers and sisters" are close relations.

Perpetual Virginity

Patristic fathers of the church call her:

...the tabernacle exempt from defilement and corruption (Hippolytus)

...as innocent as Eve before her fall, a virgin most estranged from every stain of sin, more holy than the Seraphim, the sealed fountain of the Holy Spirit, the pure seed of God, ever in body and in mind intact and immaculate (St Ephraem)

Brothers and Sisters of Jesus

The culture at the time of Jesus was to have extended families living in one home

Adelphoi (Greek) as used in the scriptures implies a broader sense of the term than simply siblings

Brethren = Adelphoi

The brothers to which Matthew refers were probably the sons of Joseph from a previous marriage or perhaps cousins

Ever Virgin

The early church took for granted the lone status of Jesus as the only son of Mary

Although never explained in detail, the Catholic Church holds as dogma that Mary was and is Virgin before, in and after Christ's birth.

It stresses thus the radical novelty of the Incarnation and Mary's no less radical and exclusive dedication to her mission as mother of her Son, Jesus Christ.

John 19: 26-27

- “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.”
- This act would conflict with 1st Century Jewish custom if Jesus had living brothers

Immaculate Conception



Immaculate Conception

- We honor Mary because Mary was honored by God and to her a special grace was bestowed (see Luke 1:28)
- In Luke we see Gabriel greeting Mary with, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you”. Using the word “kecharitomene” Gabriel conveying an abundance or plenitude of grace
- This grace extended from the time of her conception and throughout her life
- Thus is the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception

Immaculate Conception

- Refers to the conception of Mary NOT Jesus
- Proclaimed as dogma by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854
- The dogma of the Immaculate Conception states "*that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege from Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was kept free of every stain of original sin.*"
- The dogma declares that from her beginning Mary was exceptionally holy and in constant union with the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

The Assumption



Immaculate Conception

Though highlighting a privilege of Mary it in fact stresses the dignity and holiness required to become "Mother of God."

The privilege of the Immaculate Conception is the source and basis for Mary's all-holiness as Mother of God.

This dogma stresses Mary's freedom from original sin thanks to the anticipated or retroactive (here called preventive) grace of Christ's redemptive act.

By the same token, the dogma suggests Mary's all-holiness is the consequence of the absence of original sin. Mary's life is permanently and intimately related to God, and thus she is the all-holy.

The Assumption

- This dogma has no direct basis in scripture. It was nonetheless declared "divinely revealed," meaning that it is contained implicitly in Divine Revelation.
- The Assumption had been a part of the Church's spiritual and doctrinal patrimony for centuries. It had been part of theological reflection but also of the liturgy and was part of the sense of the faithful.
- The definition of the dogma does not say how the transition from Mary's earthly state to her heavenly state happened. However, the opinion that Mary passed through death as her Son did, has the stronger support in tradition.

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Queen of Heaven



Mary is entitled to the title of Queen because, as Pope Pius XII expressed it in 1946, Jesus is King throughout all eternity by nature and by right of conquest:

through him, with him, and subordinate to him, Mary is Queen by grace, by divine relationship, by right of conquest, and by singular election.

Queen of Heaven

Mary possesses a unique relationship with all three Persons of the Trinity, thereby giving her a claim to the title of Queenship.

She was chosen by God the Father to be the Mother of his Son; God the Holy Spirit chose her to be his virginal spouse for the Incarnation of the Son; and God the Son chose her to be his mother, the means of incarnating into the world for the purposes of the redemption of humanity.

Mediatrix / Intercessor



As Mediatrix of All Graces, she is ever present at the side of each person, giving nourishment and hope, from the moment of spiritual birth at Baptism to the moment of death.

Mary is accorded the title "Blessed", in recognition of her assumption to Heaven and her capacity to intercede on behalf of those who pray to her.

Catholic teachings make clear that Mary is not considered divine and prayers to her are not answered by her, they are answered by God

Our Mother



This Queen is also our Mother.

While she is not our Mother in the physical sense, she is called a spiritual mother, for she conceives, gives birth, and nurtures the spiritual lives of grace for each person.

Hail Mary (Ave Maria)

Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee

Blessed art thou among women
and blessed
is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus

Holy Mary, Mother of God

Pray for us sinners

Now and at the hour of our death

Amen

