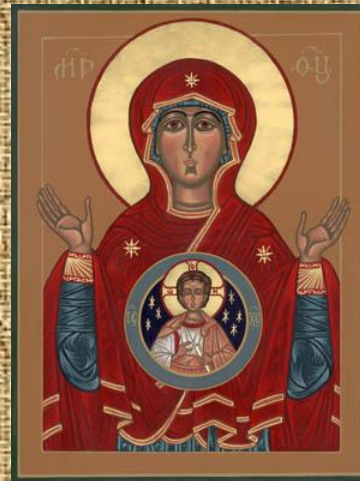


Mary . . . Mother of Jesus, Saint

Part VIIa: A Biblical Portrait



Mary: An Introduction

The teachings of Catholic Christianity about the role of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are some of the most misunderstood and exaggerated beliefs dividing the Body of Christ. Before presenting the teaching of the Church about Mary, there are some important givens or assumptions to be stated about the Church, Mary and the Bible.

The official teaching of the Church has never considered beliefs about Mary to be in any way equal in importance to truths about God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.



Vatican Council II expressed it best when the Council Fathers wrote:



On Ecumenism, No. 11

... in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or “hierarchy” of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.

The truths about Mary are important because they are still truth, since they are based in the Bible. But they are not central to the primary gospel message of our salvation through Jesus Christ.

As an example of the basic gospel message without Mary, we have only to look at the writings of Paul. In Pauline theology, Mary is mentioned only once, and not even by name.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ...



Catholics believe that the understanding of the Church about Mary, as about all Christian truth (e.g., the understanding of the Trinity) deepens and becomes more accurate over the centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:26

When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.

John 16:12-13

I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.

When the Catholic Church appears to teach “new doctrines” about Mary, it is often a statement of truth against some current errors or a clarification of truths that have always been taught and believed by Christians through the centuries. The Church believes that handing on these truths participates in the admonition of Paul.

2 Thessalonians 2:15

Therefore, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement (*our word*) or by a letter (*written tradition*) of ours.

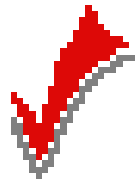
On the Church, No. 67, Vatican Council II

“The sacred synod ... strongly urges theologians and preachers of the word of God to **be careful to refrain as much from all false exaggeration** as from too summary an attitude in considering the special dignity of the Mother of God.

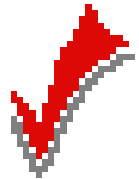
Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's magisterium, let them **rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin** which always refer to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity, and devotion.”



Consequently, two fundamental criteria guide the teaching authority of the Catholic Church as it seeks to discern what are the authentic beliefs about Mary which Jesus through His Holy Spirit would have us know:



No belief can contradict anything faithfully handed down from the Apostles either in the written tradition, the Bible, or in the oral tradition of the Church;



Any truth which develops under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and reflection upon the deposit of revelation must be demonstrated to have been accepted over a long period of time by the People of God.

A Biblical Portrait of Mary

Mary is prefigured immediately after the Fall of Man; her divine motherhood is prophesied.

Genesis 3:14-15

Then the Lord God said to the serpent: "... 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."



Mary and her role in the history of our salvation is foretold by the prophet Isaiah; her virginity and divine motherhood is confirmed.

Isaiah 7:13-14

Then the LORD said (to Ahaz): “... Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: **the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.**”



Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham and ends with Mary.

Matthew 1:16

Jacob the father of **Joseph, the husband of Mary**. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah.



Luke narrates the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she is to conceive a son and remain a virgin.

Luke 1: 26-38

...(The angel Gabriel said) “**Hail, favored one!** The Lord is with you ... The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” ... Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”



Luke also narrates Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth (pregnant with John the Baptist). It is Elizabeth who first calls Mary “the mother of God (Lord).”

Luke 1:39-45

... When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that **the mother of my Lord** should come to me? ... Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”



Luke 1:46-49

And Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”



Matthew records Mary's engagement to Joseph.

Matthew. 1:18-25

... When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. ... the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” He (Joseph) had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.



Luke narrates the birth events of Jesus.

Luke 2:1-19

... Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes



and laid him in a manger ... (Shepherds) went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant ... Mary kept all these things (that the shepherds told her), reflecting on them in her heart.

Luke includes the circumcision and presentation of Jesus.

Luke 2:33-35

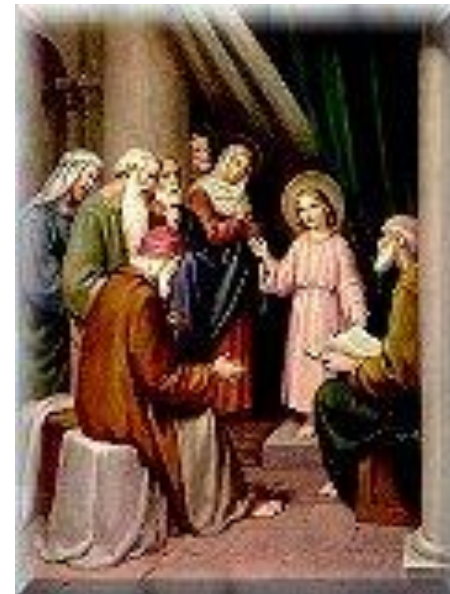
The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."



Luke narrates the loss and finding of Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem by Mary and Joseph.

Luke 2:48-51

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.



John records the wedding feast at Cana where Mary prompts Jesus' first miracle.

John 2:1-12

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine.” (And) Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.”



Matthew writes of Jesus' own words that compare his relationship with his followers to his relationship with his mother.

Matthew 12:46-50 (Mark 3:31-35)

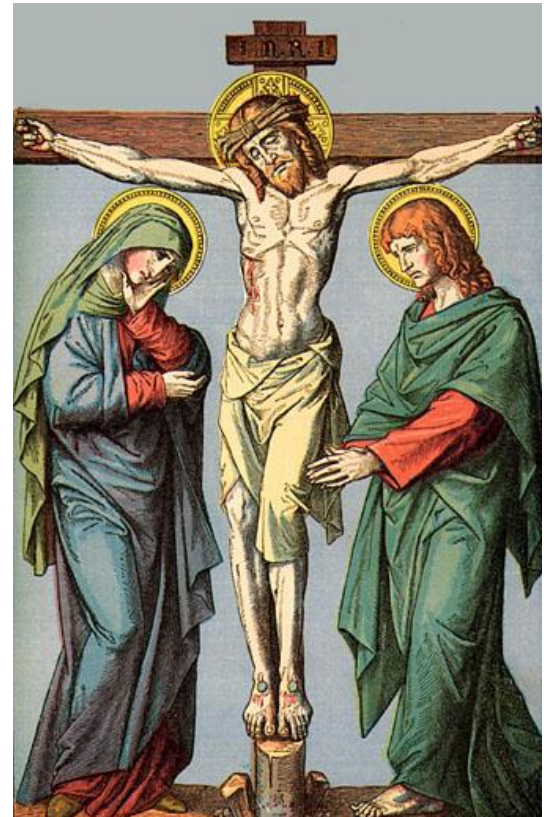
While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. ... And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.”



It is John (an eye witness) who recalls his personal experience at the foot of the cross on Calvary.

John 19:25-27

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. 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



Luke, in his Acts of the Apostles, records the presence of Mary with the Apostles in the community in Jerusalem between the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost.

Acts of the Apostles 1:12-14

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying. ... All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.



A final reference to Mary is found in John's Book of Revelation.

Revelation 12:1-5



A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. ... She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne.

End of
Mary, A Biblical Portrait, Part VIIa

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Marian Dogmas, Part VIIb