

Mary, Mother of God

Have you ever wondered why Mary was chosen to be the mother of Jesus? Of course, she was a virgin betrothed to a man of the tribe of Judah (Mary was also of the tribe of Judah); both of these facts would fulfill prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. In truth, the Scriptures don't inform us of the precise reason that Mary was chosen by God for this honor, but it was a tremendous privilege to be the mother of the Christ!

The angel Gabriel referred to Mary as “highly favored” and “blessed...among women” (Luke 1:28). When Mary visited Elizabeth prior to the birth of John the Baptist, Elizabeth also called Mary “blessed...among women” (Luke 1:42). In a discourse known as the Magnificat, Mary acknowledged that God had done “great things” for her and that she would be called “blessed” by all future generations (Luke 1:46-55).

Matthew and Luke in their gospels give accounts of the birth of Jesus and the earliest years of his life, but little is recorded in any of the gospels of His childhood. In fact, His mother Mary is mentioned relatively little after the nativity stories. She was present at the marriage feast in Cana (John 2:1). On another occasion, Mary and Jesus' siblings wanted to talk with Him while He was teaching the multitudes (Matthew 12:46-49; Mark 3:31-35). John's gospel tells us that Mary was present at the cross as Jesus was dying (John 19:25-27). She was also among the disciples gathered in Jerusalem after the ascension of Jesus, the last mention of her in the New Testament (Acts 1:14).

In light of the paucity of information about Mary in the New Testament, the large body of dogma about her developed by the Roman Catholic Church is puzzling. Consider the position that she holds in the estimation of Catholics:

Pope Paul VI, in 1964, described her as “Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church.”¹

“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.” (Pope Pius XII, 1950)²

No mention is made of her body being changed--evidently her earthly body was taken up into heaven—“and the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was free from original sin and so was not subject to death in the same way that creatures are, was taken into Heaven and united to her soul.”³

“Mary is the greatest of the saints, the Queen of all Saints, and the Queen of Heaven.”⁴

Mary is considered to be “Co-Mediatrix with Christ.” When Mary presented Jesus in the temple, she supposedly gave her consent for her Son to be offered as a sacrifice. Some Catholics have gone on to say that she actually became a sacrifice as well. “Arnold of Chartres says: ‘The will of Mary and the will of Christ were then united so intimately that both offered up the same sacrifice. Because of that union of wills, Mary brought about with Christ that one effect, namely, the salvation of the world.’ Jesus

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Edition, p. 273.

² Ibid, p. 274.

³ Jessie Corrigan Pegis, *A Practical Catholic Dictionary*, p. 20.

⁴ Pegis p. 34

accomplished it by making satisfaction for our sins; Mary by obtaining the application of this satisfaction to us.”⁵

“ ‘Anyone who had been present then on Mount Calvary,’ says St. John Chrysostom, ‘would have seen two altars on which two great sacrifices were being offered: the one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary.’ In fact we may even say with St. Bonaventure: ‘there was only one altar – the cross of the Son on which together with the divine Lamb, the Victim, His Mother was also being sacrificed.’ And therefore the saint asks Mary: ‘O Lady, where are you? Near the cross? No, you are actually on the cross, being crucified, sacrificing yourself along with your Son.’”⁶

Pope Leo XIII affirmed that no one can approach the Father except through the Son and no one can approach the Son except through Mary. As queen of heaven, supposedly Mary is able to prevail upon God to grant any request she might make on behalf of those who pray to her!

[Quoting St. Peter Damian] “When the Mother goes to seek a favor for us from Jesus Christ [whom the saint calls the golden altar of mercy, at which sinners obtain pardon], her Son regards her prayers so highly and is so eager to satisfy her, that when she prays it seems as if she were commanding rather than praying, and as if she were a lady rather than a servant...[quoting St. Bernadine of Siena] “At the command of Mary, everybody obeys, even God.”⁷

“Therefore, no less truly and properly may it be affirmed that nothing at all of the very great treasure of every grace, which the Lord confers, since ‘grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,’ nothing is imparted to us except through Mary...so, just as no one can approach the highest Father except through the Son, so no one can approach Christ except through His Mother.”⁸

The “Hail Mary” prayer, part of the rosary recitations, also emphasizes the mediatrix role of Mary (“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”⁹). Also associated with the rosary is the 5th “glorious mystery,” which is identified as “the coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth” (based, in part, on Revelation 12:1).¹⁰

Augustine declared that Mary was free from actual sin. Later, it was taught that Mary was also free from original sin, having been made free from all stain of original sin at the moment of conception and Pope Pius IX made this idea church dogma in 1854.

Those who study the Bible may wonder about the source of all of this dogma regarding Mary. In the New Testament there is not one mention of Mary as “mediatrix.” She is never called the “mother of the church” by any of the inspired writers. As many of his prayers as Paul recorded, not once did he petition Mary for grace...or anything else! Nor did he instruct other Christians to pray to Mary.

⁵ Alphonsus Maria de Ligouri, *The Glories of Mary*, Part II, p. 75. Quoted in *Gospel Anchor*, Vol. 14, No. 10, June 1988, p. 7.

⁶ De Ligouri, op. cit., p. 135.

⁷ De Ligouri, *The Glories of Mary*, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 112-113. Quoted by L. R. Wilson, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 56.

⁸ Pope Leo XIII, “*Octobri mense*,” on the Rosary, Sept. 22, 1891. Quoted in Wilson, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 55.

⁹ www.theholyroary.org

¹⁰ Ibid

In fact, people didn't begin to pray to Mary until the middle of the sixth century! How did all those disciples who lived prior to that time manage to receive grace without praying to "the Queen of Heaven and Earth"?

Nowhere in the New Testament is Mary said to have suffered on the cross. The redemptive work accomplished on the cross is attributed to Jesus Christ (e.g., Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20).

The Roman Catholic Church's doctrine concerning Mary is a perfect example of imaginative fabrication, another product of "church tradition."