

WORLD RELIGIONS

Roman Catholicism and Mary

Lesson #10

Anyone who has been a Roman Catholic for any length of time will tell you of the importance of Mary in Roman Catholicism. In fact, Roman Catholicism in some places puts Mary as the central focus of worship. In Roman Catholic artwork Mary is often portrayed in the center, the controller, the “dispenser of all graces.” She is the one calling the shots, she is the compassionate one, the sinless one and works with Christ to save sinners. Like many other doctrines taught by Roman Catholicism, many Roman Catholics are unaware of the degree to which Mary is worshiped or the doctrines that are said to be true concerning her and how they clash with what the Word of God teaches. In this lesson we will look at some of the doctrines and practices in Roman Catholicism concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus. In a later lesson we will compare the doctrines to what the Word of God teaches to show they are false and unbiblical.

I. WHO IS MARY?

- A. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*: “Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was a young woman, a virgin, living in Nazareth, and a relative of Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5; 2:26). Pledged to marry a carpenter named Joseph, the angel Gabriel appeared to her, announcing she would give birth to “the Son of the Most High” who would sit on “the throne of His father David” (Luke 1:32 HCSB). When Mary raised the issue of her virginity, the angel indicated the conception would be supernatural (Luke 1:34–35). Matthew said this virginal conception was a fulfillment of Isa. 7:14. Subsequently, Mary visited Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–45). Later, after journeying to Bethlehem and giving birth to Jesus (Luke 2:1–20), Mary and Joseph presented the baby to the Lord at the temple (Luke 2:22–38). Matthew indicates that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus lived in Bethlehem until the visit of the magi, when the threat posed by Herod forced them to take refuge in Egypt (Matt. 2:1–18). The family then lived in Nazareth in Galilee (Matt. 2:19–23; Luke 2:39).”¹
- B. *Wikipedia*, discussing the Roman Catholic view of the “Blessed Virgin Mary,” states: “As the mother of Jesus Christ, Mary has a central role in the life of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic veneration of her as the Blessed Virgin Mary has grown over time both in importance and manifestation, not only in prayer but in art, poetry and music. Popes have encouraged this veneration but from time to time have also taken

¹ Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1086.

steps to reform it. Overall, there are significantly more titles, feasts and venerative Marian practices among Roman Catholics than any other Christian traditions.

Roman Catholic veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary is based on Holy Scripture: *In the fullness of time, God sent his son, born of a woman*. The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God through Mary thus signifies her honor as Mother of God. From the Council of Ephesus in 431, which dogmatized this belief, to Vatican II and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Mater* encyclical the Virgin Mary has come to be seen, not only as *the Mother of God* but also as *the Mother of the Church*.

The key role of the Virgin Mary in Roman Catholic beliefs, her veneration, and the growth of Roman Catholic Mariology have not only come about by official statements made in Rome but have often been driven from *the ground up*, by the Marian writings of the saints and from the masses of believers, and at times via reported Marian apparitions to young and simple children on remote hilltops, which have then influenced the higher levels of the Holy See via *sensus fidei*. The Holy See continues to approve of Marian apparitions on remote mountains, the latest approval being as recent as May 2008.] Some apparitions such as Fatima have given rise to Marian Movements and Societies with millions of members, and many other Marian societies exist around the world."²

II. KEY MARIAN DOCTRINES

A. Immaculate Conception and Sinlessness of Mary

1. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: "In the Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of 8 December, 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin."³
2. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: "Mary was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin at the first moment of her animation, and

²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blessed_Virgin_Mary_%28Roman_Catholic%29 (all statements in this article are documented in the original Wikipedia article but left out here).

³<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>

sanctifying grace was given to her before sin could have taken effect in her soul.”⁴

3. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: “The person of Mary, in consequence of her origin from Adam, should have been subject to sin, but, being the new Eve, who was to be the mother of the new Adam, she was, by the eternal counsel of God and by the merits of Christ, withdrawn from the general law of original sin. Her redemption was the very masterpiece of Christ's redeeming wisdom.”⁵

B. “Mother of God”

1. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: “The Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ, the mother of God.”⁶
2. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: “Mary's Divine motherhood is based on the teaching of the Gospels, on the writings of the Fathers, and on the express definition of the Church. St. Matthew (1:25) testifies that Mary “brought forth her first-born son” and that He was called Jesus. According to St. John (1:15) Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Word Who assumed human nature in the womb of Mary. As Mary was truly the mother of Jesus, and as Jesus was truly God from the first moment of His conception, Mary is truly the mother of God. Even the earliest Fathers did not hesitate to draw this conclusion as may be seen in the writings of St. Ignatius, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian. The contention of Nestorius denying to Mary the title “Mother of God” was followed by the teaching of the Council of Ephesus proclaiming Mary to be *Theotokos* [God bearer] in the true sense of the word.”⁷

C. Perpetual Virginity

1. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: “The perpetual virginity of our Blessed Lady was taught and proposed to our belief not merely by the councils and creeds, but also by the early Fathers.”⁸

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464b.htm>

⁷Ibid.

⁸<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15448a.htm>

2. *Wikipedia*: "Perpetual virginity of Mary', means that Mary was a virgin before, during and after giving birth. (De fide) This oldest Marian Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox doctrine affirms Mary's "real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made Man." Thus, by the teaching of this dogma, the faithful believe that Mary was ever-Virgin (Greek ἀειπάρθενος) for the remainder of her life, making Jesus her only biological son, whose conception and birth are miraculous."⁹

D. Bodily Assumption Before Death

1. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: "Today, the belief in the corporeal assumption of Mary is universal in the East and in the West; according to Benedict XIV (De Festis B.V.M., I, viii, 18) it is a probable opinion, which to deny were impious and blasphemous."¹⁰
2. "By promulgating the Bull *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1 November, 1950, Pope Pius XII declared infallibly that the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was a dogma of the Catholic Faith."¹¹
3. "Likewise, the Second Vatican Council taught in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* that "the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things."¹²

E. Co-redemptrix

1. The August 25th, 1997 issue of *Newsweek*, had as its cover story, "The Meaning of Mary." The reporter said that during the previous four years the Roman Catholic church had received 4.3 million signatures petitioning the Pope to exercise his papal infallibility and declare Mary to be "Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of all Graces and Advocate for the people of God." Signatures included from 500 bishops, 42 cardinals, and notables like Mother Teresa, John O' Conner of New York, and several cardinals serving in the Vatican

⁹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marian_doctrines_of_the_Catholic_Church#Perpetual_virginity_of_Mary . Quoting in part from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 499.

¹⁰<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02006b.htm>

¹¹Ibid. (See note at bottom of page).

¹²Ibid. (See note at bottom of page).

itself who all believed that: 1) Mary participates in the redemption of sinners with Christ. 2) That all saving graces come to us through Mary's intercession. And 3) that all the prayers and petitions of the saints must flow through Mary.

2. Pope John Paul the II declared: “. . .it was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysteriously and supernaturally fruitful for the Redemption of the world.”¹³
3. In *The Glories of Mary*, by St. Alphonsus Liguori,¹⁴ he asserts:
 - a. “Sinners receive pardon by Mary,” and, “Mary is our life because she obtains for us the pardon of our sin.”¹⁵
 - b. “He falls and is lost who has no recourse to Mary.”¹⁶
 - c. “We shall be heard more quickly if we have recourse to Mary and call on her holy name, than we should if we called on the name of Jesus Christ our Savior.”¹⁷
 - d. “Mary . . . is even queen of hell.”¹⁸
 - e. “All power is given to thee in heaven and on earth that at the command of Mary all obey, even God. Thus...God has placed the whole church...under the dominion of Mary.”¹⁹

¹³http://www.motherofallpeoples.com/Articles/Great_Papal_Excerpts/marys-suffering-fruitful-for-the-redemption-of-the-world.html (excerpt from the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, February 11, 1984)

¹⁴Liguori is a favored Roman Catholic saint and writer <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01334a.htm>.

¹⁵<http://www.catholictradition.org/Mary/mary9a.htm> Liguori attributes this statement to early church father Chrysostom, and agrees with it, pg. 94 *The Glories of Mary*.

¹⁶Ibid. 94.

¹⁷Ibid. 136.

¹⁸Ibid. 143

¹⁹Ibid. 180-181.

4. John Paul II said, "Membership in the Militia means complete dedication to the Kingdom of God and to the salvation of souls through Mary Immaculate."²⁰
5. In another Roman Catholic work by Saint Louis de Montfort, *The Secrecy of the Rosary*, we are told that by praying the Hail Mary's of the rosary:
 - a. It gradually gives us a perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - b. It purifies our souls, washing away sin.
 - c. It gives victory over our enemies.
 - d. It makes it easy for us to practice virtue.
 - e. It sets us on fire with love of Jesus.
 - f. It enriches us with the graces and merits.
 - g. It supplies us with what is needed to pay all our debts to God and to our fellow men.
 - h. It obtains all kinds of graces for us from Almighty God.²¹

III. MARIOLATRY (THE IDOLATRY OF WORSHIPPING MARY)

A. Mary – Mediatrix of All Graces

1. In Ligouri's book, *The Glories of Mary* he claims Mary "is truly a mediatrix of peace between sinners and God."²²
2. Benedict XV, in a decree on *Joan of Arc*: "In every miracle we must recognize the mediation of Mary, through whom, according to God's will, every grace and blessing comes to us."²³

²⁰<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/666604/posts> The militia is a group whose goal it is to "To Lead Every Individual With Mary to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus."

²¹<http://www.hail-mary-rosaries.com/7-benefits.html> St. Louis de Montfort, *Secrecy of the Rosary*, 65.

²² *The Glories of Mary*, 82-83.

²³ Mark I. Miravalle, *The Heart of Marian Doctrine and Devotion*, (Goleta: Queenship Publishing, 2006) 108.

3. Plus XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, 1928: "Confiding in her intercession with Jesus, "the one Mediator of God and man, who wished to associate his own Mother with himself as the advocate of sinners, as the dispenser and mediatrix of grace."²⁴
4. Plus XII, *Superiore Anno*, 1940: "As St. Bernard declares, 'it is the will of God that we obtain favors through Mary, let everyone hasten to have recourse to Mary.'" John XXIII, see Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*.
5. John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 1980, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, "In fact, by being assumed into heaven she has not laid aside the office of salvation but by the manifold intercession she continues to obtain for us the grace of eternal salvation."
6. Mary, according to Roman Catholic dogma, stands between the sinner and Christ as an advocate, a mediatrix, a go between, to intercede for them so that they can receive God's saving grace. Vatican II council states in ch. 8, in the section entitled "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" these words, "Taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation."²⁵

B. **Worship of Mary**

1. In 787 at the Second Council of Nicea the Roman Catholic church made a distinction between the veneration of the saints (*dulia*) and the worship of God (*latria*). They made it clear that God alone was to receive worship. Yet, they also said Mary is in an exalted class far above all saints and that she is to receive super veneration or *hyperdulia* which in every way is worship equaling if not exceeding that of God. Worship of Mary includes praying to Mary, bowing to icons, statues, and images of Mary, confessing, praising, adoring, and requesting things from Mary as one should only do for God, who alone is to be worshiped and prayed to.
2. The most common Roman Catholic prayers are Hail Marys prayed from a string of beads called the rosary. As the Roman Catholic worshiper is practicing vain repetition, Mary is hailed or prayed to fifty times.

²⁴http://www.motherofallpeoples.com/Articles/General_Mariology/mediatrix-of-all-graces/Page-2.html

²⁵http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a9p6.htm *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #969.

3. In 1974 Pope John Paul VI affirmed in his apostolic exhortation, *Marialis Cultus*, that praying hail Mary's was "the compendium of the gospel" and "one of the best and most efficacious prayers. . . that the Christian family is invited to recite."²⁶

C. Examples of Mariolatry

1. *Washington Post*: In 1997 someone observed a stain on the subway floor in Guadalupe, Mexico. Since that time thousands have visited the site to worship the stain as if it is a miracle appearance of the Virgin Mary.²⁷
2. *CBS News*: In 2003 Milton Hospital near Boston had to call the Roman Catholic church in an effort to stop Roman Catholics who appeared by the tens of thousands to worship and offer prayers to distortion in a hospital window that some believed was the image of the Virgin Mary.²⁸
3. *BBC News*: In 2004 Diane Duyser sold a portion of a toasted cheese sandwich for \$28,000 because it had the image of the virgin Mary on it.²⁹
4. *CBS News*: In 2005, on a freeway underpass in Chicago, someone noticed a concrete stain on the wall that looked like the Virgin Mary. Thousands of devout Roman Catholics flocked to the site in order to worship the image of "Mary." The Roman Catholic church has not condemned any of these practices as idolatry and has not excommunicated anyone who offers prayer to the stain in the concrete.³⁰
5. The Roman Catholic has officially approved of many supposed sightings of the virgin Mary. Because of this, Roman Catholics around the world make pilgrimages to these sights.³¹

²⁶http://ourladyofsouthcarolina.net/Mission_Statement_of_the_Shrine.pdf

²⁷<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-725720.html>

²⁸<http://www.cbs3springfield.com/news/local/30041009.html>

²⁹<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4034787.stm>

³⁰<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/04/20/national/main689630.shtml>

³¹<http://www.marypages.com> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marian_apparition

6. If you send your children to a Roman Catholic school they will most likely be taught this song from the Baltimore Catechism. The title of the song is “Daily, daily, sing to Mary,” the words are as follows:

*Daily, daily sing to Mary Sing, my soul, her praises due;
All her feasts, her actions worship, With the heart's devotion true.*

*She is mighty to deliver; Call her, trust her lovingly;
When the tempest rages round thee, She will calm the troubled sea.*

*Gifts of heaven she has given, Noble Lady, to our race;
She the Queen who decks her subject, With the light of God's own grace.*

- D. It is clear from the resources cited in this lesson that Roman Catholicism has turned Mary into a goddess to be worshiped like the ancient Babylonian cults. While some Roman Catholics deny that Roman Catholicism teaches the worship of Mary, the fact is the church and its followers clearly affirm it—millions of Roman Catholics do in fact worship Mary, including Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops. Mary has in many respects taken the place of Christ. Notice in the photo below, Mary is wearing a crown and the Pope is worshiping the image of her.

