

# Mary, Model of Faith: The Year of Faith through the Eyes of Mary

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## PART I: Mary in the New Testament

**Galatians 4:4-5** – “But when the fullness of time had come, *God sent his Son, born of a woman*, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.”

**Mark 3:31-35** – “Then *his mother* and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him.” (similar in Matt 12:46-50; shorter in Luke 8:19-21)

**Mark 6:3** – “Is not this the carpenter, the *son of Mary* and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” (similar in Matt 13:55; not in Luke 4:22)

**Matt 1—2** – **Mary** is mentioned four times in **Infancy Narrative** (1:16-25; 2:11-21); but focus is on Joseph

**Luke 1—2** – **Mary** and Elizabeth are prominent in **Infancy Narrative**; esp. in the Annunciation (1:26-38), Visitation (1:39-56, incl. Mary’s *Magnificat*), Nativity (2:1-7), Presentation in the Temple (2:22-38), and finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple (2:41-52).

**Acts 1:14** – After Jesus’ ascension, his apostles stay in Jerusalem “constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, *including Mary the mother of Jesus*, as well as his brothers” (cf. 2:1 “they all”)

**John 2:1-12** – Jesus’ mother (not named) at the Wedding of Cana, the first “sign” that Jesus does

**John 19:25b-27** – Jesus’ mother, Mary Magdalene, and the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the cross

**Revelation 12** – Vision of “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birthpangs, in the agony of giving birth.”

## PART II: Mary in the Early Church

“**Infancy Gospel of Thomas**” (apocryphal) – some legends about Jesus’ childhood (age 5-12)

“**Infancy Gospel of James**” (apocryphal) – stories about the birth and childhood of Mary herself

**Patristic Writers:** Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo

Virgin Birth proves Jesus’ divinity & humanity; Mary contrasted with Eve; Mary first to be saved

**Council of Nicea** (325) – early Creed

Jesus “became flesh, was made man” (*no mention of Mary!*)

**Council of Constantinople** (381) – expanded Creed

Jesus “became flesh *from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary* and was made man.”

**Council of Ephesus** (431) – proclaims Mary as “*Theotokos*” (lit. “God-bearer”; often transl. “Mother of God”)

“If anyone does not confess that Emmanuel is God in truth, and therefore that the holy virgin is the mother of God (*theotoktos*), for she bore in a fleshly way the Word of God become flesh, let him be anathema.”

“*Sub tuum praesidium*” (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) – earliest prayer/poem directed to Mary; various Greek & Latin versions

“Beneath your compassion, we take refuge, O God-bearer; our petitions do not despise in time of trouble, but rescue us from dangers, only pure, only blessed one.”

“*Akathistos*” (6<sup>th</sup>-cent. hymn) – long liturgical service, popular in Constantinople and Eastern Churches

## **PART III: Development of Marian Dogmas**

**Perpetual Virginity of Mary** – proclaimed by Lateran Council of 649 (local council of Roman church)

“Mary was a virgin in conceiving Jesus, in giving birth to him, and in remaining always a virgin ever after.” (*USCCA*, Glossary, 523)

“If anyone does not, according to the Holy Fathers, confess truly and properly that holy Mary, EVER VIRGIN and immaculate, is Mother of God, since in this latter age she conceived in true reality without human seed from the Holy Spirit, God the Word Himself, who before the ages was born of God the Father, and gave birth to Him without corruption, her virginity remaining equally inviolate after the birth, let him be condemned.” (Lateran Council of 649)

Difficult Biblical Texts: Matt 1:25; Luke 2:7; Mark 3:31-35; 6:3 (and par. in Matt & Luke)

**Immaculate Conception of Mary** – defined 1854 by Pope Pius IX; celebrated Dec. 8

“A dogma of the Church that teaches that Mary was conceived without Original Sin due to the anticipated redemptive graces of her Son, Jesus.” (*USCCA*, Glossary, 515)

“We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.” (Pius IX, “*Ineffabilis Deus*”; Dec. 8, 1854)

Biblical Supporting Texts: Luke 1:28, 42, 45

**Assumption of Mary into Heaven** – defined 1950 by Pope Pius XII; celebrated Aug. 15

“The dogma that when the Blessed Virgin Mary’s earthly life was finished, because she was sinless, she was kept from corruption and taken soul and body into heavenly glory” (*USCCA*, Glossary, 505)

“By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.” (Pius XII, “*Munificentissimus Deus*”; Nov. 1, 1950)

Biblical Supporting Texts: Rev 12; also Rom 5:12-19; 8:17; 1 Cor 15:20-23; 15:42-58

## **PART IV: Mary in the Church Today**

**Second Vatican Council: *Lumen Gentium* (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”; 1964)**

Chap. 8: “The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church”

I. Introduction

II. The Role of the Blessed Mother in the Economy of Salvation

III. On the Blessed Virgin and the Church

IV. The Cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church

V. Mary the sign of created hope and solace to the wandering people of God

**Pope Paul VI:**

- *Mense Maio* – “The Month of May” (1965)
- *Christi Matri* – “For the Mother of Christ” (1966)
- *Signum Magnum* – “On Venerating & Imitating Mary, Mother of the Church & Model of All Virtues” (1967)
- *Solemni Hac Liturgia* – “**Credo of the People of God**” (1968)
- *Marialis Cultus* – “On the right ordering and development of Devotion to the B.V.M. (1974)

## **Pope John Paul II:**

- *Redemptoris Mater* – “On the B.V.M. in the Life of the Pilgrim Church” (1987)
  - Longest Marian Encyclical; proclaimed “Marian Year”
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994; 1997)
- *Ecclesia in America* – “On the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America” (1999) – esp. par. 11
- *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* – “On the Most Holy Rosary” (2002)
  - New “Mysteries of Light”; proclaimed “Year of the Rosary”

## **Pope Benedict XVI:**

- *Deus Caritas Est* – “God is Love” (2005) – esp. par. 40-42
- *Porta Fidei* – “For the Indiction of the Year of Faith” (2011) – esp. par. 13

## **United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (2006)**

- Chap. 12: “Mary, The Church’s First and Most Perfect Member” (pp. 141-49)
  - Preface: St. Juan Diego Sees Mary
  - God’s Plan for Mary
  - “Blessed Are You Among Women”
  - Mary as Mother of the Church
  - Mary’s Maternal Intercession
- Supplementary Material:
  - For Discussion; Doctrinal Statements; Meditation; Prayer

## ***Catechism of the Catholic Church: Glossary* (U.S. ed. 2000)**

MARY: The mother of Jesus. Because she is the mother of Jesus—Son of God and second Person of the Blessed Trinity—according to the flesh, she is rightly called the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) (148, 495). Mary is also called “full of grace,” and “Mother of the Church,” and in Christian prayer and devotion, “Our Lady,” the “Blessed Virgin Mary,” and the “New Eve” (722, 726, 963).

## ***Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994/1997): three main sections on Mary**

- “...Born of the Virgin Mary” (par. 484-511)
- “Mary – Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church” (par. 963-975)
- Prayer: “In communion with the holy Mother of God” (par. 2673-2682)

## **USCCB: Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord (2005): “Elements of Spiritual Formation” (II, B, 7)**

*A Marian spirituality.* Mary perfectly models “a spiritual and apostolic life,” dealing with family concerns and tasks, remaining intimately united to her Son, cooperating in his saving work (Vat.II: AA 4). “The theological significance of Mary appears in the Church... Mary is the Church in person, and the Church as a whole embodies what Mary, as a person, anticipates” (Card. Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 353). Devotion to Mary will help the lay ecclesial minister better understand and love the Church.”

## **Marian Devotions, Marian Apparitions, Marian Prayers**

### **Marian Feasts & Memorials in the Liturgy:**

Jan. 1	March 25	July 16	Aug. 22	Oct. 7
Feb. 2	May 13	July 26	Sept. 8	Nov. 21
Feb. 11	May 31	Aug. 5	Sept. 12	Dec. 8
March 19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sat. > Pent.	Aug. 15	Sept. 15	Dec. 12

## Pope John Paul II – “*Ecclesia in America*” (Apostolic Letter, 1999)

### Par. 11: *We encounter Jesus through Mary*

At the birth of Jesus, the Magi came from the East to Bethlehem and “saw the child with Mary his Mother” (Matt 2:11). At the beginning of his public life, at the marriage of Cana, when the Son of God works the first of his signs, awakening faith in the disciples (cf. John 2:11), it is Mary who intervenes and directs the servants towards her Son in these words: “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5). In this regard I once wrote that “the Mother of Christ presents herself as the *spokeswoman of her Son's will*, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested”.<sup>(17)</sup> For this reason Mary is the sure path to our meeting with Christ. Devotion to the Mother of the Lord, when it is genuine, is always an impetus to a life guided by the spirit and values of the Gospel.

How can we fail to emphasize the role which belongs to the Virgin Mary in relation to the pilgrim Church in America journeying towards its encounter with the Lord? Indeed, the Most Blessed Virgin “is linked in a special way to the birth of the Church in the history ... of the peoples of America; through Mary they came to encounter the Lord”.<sup>(18)</sup>

Throughout the continent, from the time of the first evangelization, the presence of the Mother of God has been strongly felt, thanks to the efforts of the missionaries. In their preaching, “the Gospel was proclaimed by presenting the Virgin Mary as its highest realization. From the beginning — invoked as Our Lady of Guadalupe — Mary, by her motherly and merciful figure, was a great sign of the closeness of the Father and of Jesus Christ, with whom she invites us to enter into communion”.<sup>(19)</sup>

The appearance of Mary to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in 1531 had a decisive effect on evangelization.<sup>(20)</sup> Its influence greatly overflows the boundaries of Mexico, spreading to the whole Continent. America, which historically has been, and still is, a melting-pot of peoples, has recognized in the *mestiza* face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, “in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, an impressive example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization”.<sup>(21)</sup> Consequently, not only in Central and South America, but in North America as well, the Virgin of Guadalupe is venerated as Queen of all America.<sup>(22)</sup>

With the passage of time, pastors and faithful alike have grown increasingly conscious of the role of the Virgin Mary in the evangelization of America. In the prayer composed for the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops, Holy Mary of Guadalupe is invoked as “Patroness of all America and Star of the first and new evangelization”. In view of this, I welcome with joy the proposal of the Synod Fathers that the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother and Evangelizer of America, be celebrated throughout the continent on December 12.<sup>(23)</sup> It is my heartfelt hope that she, whose intercession was responsible for strengthening the faith of the first disciples (cf. John 2:11), will by her maternal intercession guide the Church in America, obtaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as she once did for the early Church (cf. Acts 1:14), so that the new evangelization may yield a splendid flowering of Christian life.

### Notes:

(17) Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (March 25, 1987), 21.

(18) *Propositio* 5.

(19) Third General Conf. of Latin American Bishops, Puebla, Feb. 1979, *Message to the Peoples of Latin America*, 282. For the United States, cf. NCCB, Pastoral Letter *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith* (Washington, 1973), p. 37.

(20) *Propositio* 6.

(21) John Paul II, Address at the Opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Conf. of Latin American Bishops (Oct. 12, 1992), 24.

(22) Cf. NCCB, *Behold Your Mother*, 37.

(23) Cf. *Propositio* 6.

## Bibliography on Mary

(from James Campbell's *Mary and the Saints* and <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/>, adapted by Felix Just, S.J.)

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- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. USCCB, 1994/2000. – esp. par. 487-511, 963-975, 2673-2682
- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. USCCB, 2006. – esp. Chap. 12

### Websites:

- Catholic Resources – <http://catholic-resources.org> – large biblical website of Fr. Felix Just, S.J.
- The Mary Page – <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/> – huge site devoted to many Marian topics
- Vatican Website – <http://vatican.va> – documents of Vatican II, papal encyclicals, Catechism, etc.