

# OUR LADY

## How do we Venerate Her?

THE APPEALS OF OUR LADY  
APPARITIONS AND MARIAN SHRINES IN THE WORLD

### Who is Mary Most Holy?

Mary Most Holy  
 • is a daughter of Israel, a young Hebrew from Nazareth in Galilee, "a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David" (Lk 1:26-27).  
 • "She stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from Him, with her called Daughter of Zion, and after a long expectation of the promise, the times are fulfilled and the new Economy established" (LG, 55).  
 • "This Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son, humble and high beyond all other creatures, the limit faced of the eternal cosmos, thus art the one who such nobility to human nature, that as Creator did not disdain to make himself her creature." (Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, Canto XXXVIII)

### What is the relationship between Mary and Christ?

Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

### How did this conception come about?

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, without the involvement of man. "Mary was invited to conceive him in whom the 'whole fullness of deity' would dwell" (CCC, 42). The divine response to her question, "How can this be, since I know not man?" (Lk 1:34), was given by the power of the Spirit: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35).

(... The Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of life," is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Father in a humanity drawn from her own" (CCC, 484-485). The original conception indicates that Jesus is truly Son of God.

### What does "Immaculate Conception" mean?

"God freely chose Mary from all eternity to be the Mother of His Son. In order to carry out her mission she herself was conceived immaculate. This means that, thanks to the grace of God and in anticipation of the merits of Jesus Christ, Mary was preserved from original sin from the first instant of her conception" (Compendium, 96).

### In what sense is she All Holy?

In the sense that she was never corrupted by sin during her entire existence; she is "free from all stains of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature" (LG, 56). She is "all of grace" (Lk 1:28).

### Is Mary "Ever Virgin"?

A Christian faith affirms the real and perpetual virginity of Mary, even in the birth of her only Son, Jesus. She "remained a Virgin in the conception of her Son, Virgin in his birth, pregnant Virgin, Virgin mother, perpetual Virgin" (8). Augustine.  
 • Mary is a Virgin in body and Virgin in heart. Mary, during her entire life, entrusted herself always and totally to the will of God; she was always the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38). Therefore Mary is more blessed in receiving the faith of Christ, than in conceiving the flesh of Christ" (8). Augustine. *De sancta virginitate*, 33).

The virginity of Mary also indicates the absolute and gratuitous initiative of God in the Incarnation.

And after the birth of Jesus, but not after other children, remaining ever-virgin before, after and during the birth.

### Why does Sacred Scripture speak of brothers and sisters of Jesus?

It was usual in the Old Testament and also among the contemporaries of Jesus to call also near relatives brothers and sisters. Besides this, even in our own day, priests address the lay faithful calling them brothers and sisters, in order to show the special bond which unites all in Christ Jesus.

### What was the relationship of Mary to Jesus?

• Mary, during her whole earthly life, always maintained a special relationship with her Son Jesus. The earthly life of the Mother of God was in fact characterized by its perfect harmony with the person of the Son and by a total dedication to His redemptive work accomplished ("Embracing God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son, under Him and with Him, in the grace of almighty God" (LG, 56).  
 • "This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to His death" (LG, 57).  
 • She was a faithful disciple of Christ. Even the answer of Christ – "Who is my mother? She is whoever does the will of my Father" (cf. Mk 3:35-36) – which seems a little distant with regard to His Mother, in reality expresses the greatest praise towards Mary, indicating that her "yes" constitutes exactly in the fact that Mary, before and more than any other human creature, put the will of God the Father into effect.

### What are the Marian dogmas?

- They are:
  - The Divine Motherhood of Mary (the title Mother of God, "Theotokos", was given at the Council of Ephesus – 451AD).
  - Her Immaculate Conception (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 8 December 1854).
  - Her perpetual virginity (Lateran Council – 680AD).
  - Her Assumption into heaven (Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1 Nov 1950).
- These dogmas, even though proclaimed later in the history of the Church, are contained in Divine Revelation and known by the Church's Magisterium exercised since the origins of the Church. They serve to define that faith is in a more precise, solid and definitive way. "The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from God to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary

connection with these" (CCC, 88). "Dogmas are lights along the path of faith; they illuminate it and make it secure. Conversely, if our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to witness the light shed by the dogmas of faith" (CCC, 89).

### In what sense is Mary called the Mother of God?

"The Church proclaims Mary Mother of God in so far as Jesus, who is truly her son according to the flesh, is the Son generated from the eternal Father in the divine nature, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity; Jesus Christ is "naturally" Son of the Father as by His divinity and naturally son of his mother as by his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures" (Council of Trent, Symbol, All 798).

### What does the Assumption of Mary into Heaven mean?

- Her Assumption into Heaven, body and soul, means:
- a complete conformity with her Son, who has defeated death;
- a particular participation of Mary in the Resurrection of her Son
- a unique anticipation and prefiguration of our resurrection, which will take place at the end of time: she shows to us the meaning and the destiny of the body sanctified through grace.

In the glorified body of Mary, the material creation itself begins to show something of the resurrected body of Christ.

### What is the relationship between Mary and God the Father?

"The marvelous works accomplished in Mary are the fruit of the great and gratuitous action of God the Father. To God's free gift of grace and substance, Mary responds with her ready and total adherence of faith. "Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Father and the Son, who she invokes as intercommunion." (Pasha Document, n. 282).

As a true woman of prayer, the Virgin called on the Holy Spirit to fill her womb in the conception, that the child might grow "in wisdom, years and grace, before God and men" (Lk 2:52). Under this profile, Mary is presented as a model for parents, demonstrating the need for care and for every of her age.

### What is the relationship between Mary and the Holy Spirit?

"The mystery of the Virgin Mary highlights the action of the Holy Spirit, who, directed in her womb the conception of the child and continually guided her life. The titles of Comforter, Advocate, Auxiliatrix, attributed to Mary by the piety of the Christian people, do not obscure, but exalt the action of the Holy Spirit and dispose believers to benefit from his gifts."

The cooperation of Mary with the Holy Spirit, manifested in the Annunciation and in the Visitation, expresses itself in an attitude of constant docility to the inspiration of the Paraclete.

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Without doubt, she was present at the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit who already dwelt in Mary, having worked marvels of grace in her, now rekindles into her heart, communicating gifts and charisms necessary for the exercise of her spiritual motherhood.

Mary participated in the life and prayer of the first Christian community. Saint Luke recounts that the community at the origins of the Church was composed not only of Apostles and Disciples, but also of women, amongst whom Luke names uniquely, "Mary, the Mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14).

Even now, in the life of the Church, "Christ is called by the same Spirit to cooperate in a maternal way with Him. He continually rekindles in the Church's memory the words of Jesus to the beloved: "Behold your mother", and he invites believers to love Mary as Christ loved her. Every deepening of the link with Mary permits the Holy Spirit to act more fully for the life of the Church."

### What is the relationship between Mary and the Church?

Mary Most Holy is:

- a member of the Church
- a model of the Church
- a model of the Church
- an intercessor for the Church.

### In what way does Mary belong to the Church?

• She is our sister, the sacramental member of the Church.  
 • She is the first redeemed, saved by Christ "in a most sublime manner" by her immaculate conception (cf. Bull "Ineffabilis Deus", Pius IX, Act 1, 1854) and entering into communion with the grace of the Holy Spirit.  
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receive the good news of salvation and thus laid the foundations of their filial affection for her;

- Mary cooperates in the birth and development of the divine life in the members of Christ, that is, in us. She is Mother of the Church in the order of grace.
- "The maternal duty of Mary toward men is in no wise obscure or diminished this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power. For all the subtle influence of the Blessed Virgin on men ... flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it" (LG, 60).

### In what sense is Mary the model of the Church?

The Church ... by receiving the word of God in a radical and exclusive way in the various forms of consecrated life, she encourages all Christians to live with particular commitment in a life of chastity according to their state and to trust themselves to the Lord in the various circumstances of life. She who in the history of the Holy Spirit purifies herself to rediscover their own bodies as temples of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:19) and to respect their nobility and holiness.

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redeemed it and exalted it. This is of primary importance for our cultural heritage, in which woman must be much more valued, while defining more clearly and fully the part which she plays in society. Mary is a guarantee of female greatness, showing in a specific way what it is to be a woman with her vocation to be a soul, a gift capable of spiritualizing the flesh and ennobling the spirit" (Pasha Document, n. 289).

- Mary actualises in herself in a paradigmatic and sublime way the two dimensions, vocations of woman: virginity and motherhood.
- Mary lived, in the particular and exclusive way of a woman, the union of mother and son.

### What type of veneration do we give to Mary?

From the beginning there has always been a particular veneration for the Virgin Mary amongst Christians. However, "after the Council of Ephesus the cult of the people of God toward Mary wonderfully increased in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation" (LG, 98). This is expressed especially in liturgical feasts, amongst which, from the beginning of the 6th century, "the day of Mary, Theotokos" assumed particular relevance, celebrated on the 18th August in Jerusalem and later becoming the feast of the Dormition or Assumption.

The cult of Mary has developed up to our own day with a marvellous continuity, alternating between periods of flourishing and critical periods which, nevertheless, often had the merit of promoting even more its renewal.

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