

later in chapter 12, where we see the woman giving birth to a son who will rule the nations with a rod of iron (vs. 5). If the son is Jesus, then the woman must be Mary, whom John has seen, body and soul, in heaven. “Arise, O Lord, and go to thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy might” (Ps 132:8).

Beyond this, the Assumption of Mary follows from Who Christ is. During the reign of David and his descendants, the queen of the kingdom was actually the *mother* of the king, not his wife (cf. 1 Kings 2:19; 15:13; 2 Kings 10:13; Ps 45:9; Jer 13:18; 29:2). As soon as the king was crowned, the queen was likewise crowned, and she was seated on a throne right beside him (cf. 1 Kings 2:19).

Now, who is Jesus? He is the new king from the family of David (cf. Mk 11:10; Lk 1:32). It makes perfect sense that from the moment He ascended into heaven and took up His throne, Jesus would assume Mary into heaven and install her as His queen mother. In the Davidic kingdom, there is no king without a queen.

Mary, God’s “Fellow Worker” in Bringing Grace

The final Marian doctrine to be discussed here declares that Mary is “Mediatrice” of God’s grace. By this, we mean that Mary cooperated in an extraordinary

It may seem peculiar at first to think of a human being working with God to bring us grace, but Scripture says that *all Christians* are called to contribute to this vital work. It bears repeating: Jesus alone is the Savior and Redeemer of all humankind. Yet, it is also true that He wishes to involve us in His work.

For example, St. Paul said, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). He considered himself a steward of God’s grace that was given to him for others (cf. Eph 3:2; cf. Rom 11:13–14; 1 Cor 7:16; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 2:10; Jas 5:20; 1 Pet 3:1; 4:10; Jude 1:22–23). We are “God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9), “working together with Him” (2 Cor 6:1).

Now, Mary played her part just as Paul did, but her cooperation was and is uniquely exemplary. Why? Consider her amazing life. Mary’s “yes” to God was the occasion for the Son to enter human history and take on our human nature. She gave Him the flesh that was nailed to the Cross for our salvation. Moreover, since she was sinless, she could stand at the foot of the Cross and unite her will and her suffering perfectly with the will and the suffering of her Son. No other human being can claim to do what Mary did.

This was undoubtedly rewarded with a tremendous outpouring of grace for the benefit of the Church. How

do we know this? We see, from Scripture, that whenever someone suffers for the sake of the Church, the Church is rewarded with an application of the grace of the Cross.

St. Paul said, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and ... for the sake of his body, that is, the church” (Col 1:24). Paul is showing us that the Church benefits whenever we unite our sufferings with the sufferings of Christ on the Cross. This is what he did (cf. 2 Cor 1:6; 4:8–15; Phil 2:17; 3:10; Col 1:24), this is what he encouraged others to do, and this is what Mary did.

Since Mary was sinless, she was able to do it *perfectly*, and so we honor her role in salvation history with the title “Mediatrice.”

Conclusion

These teachings, and the Scripture passages that support them, point to Mary as uniquely blessed by the fruit of her womb. If God had not chosen her to be His mother, then none of her other unique qualities would have existed. He made her the most extraordinary woman who has ever lived, and it’s with good reason that “all generations will call [her] blessed” (Lk 1:48).

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Prayer of consecration to Jesus

God our Father, I believe that out of Your infinite love You have created me. In a thousand ways I have shunned Your love. I repent of each and every one of my sins. Please forgive me.

Thank you for sending your Son to die for me, to save me from eternal death. I choose this day to renew my covenant with you and to place Jesus at the center of my heart. I surrender to him as Lord over my whole life and over all things.

I ask you now to flood my heart and soul with the Gift of Your Holy Spirit and to grant me the gift of new life. Give me the grace and courage to live as a missionary disciple for the rest of my days. Amen.

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Marian Doctrines



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Introduction

Scripture might seem to say very little about Mary, the mother of Jesus, compared to other great figures in the formative years of the Church, yet Catholics believe that she is the greatest woman who ever lived. Let's take a closer look at the Scriptural evidence and see if perhaps more is said about Mary than first meets the eye.

Mary, Mother of God

This pamphlet looks at five doctrines about Mary. The first one proclaims that Mary is the Mother of God. The logic here is simple: If Mary is the mother of Jesus and Jesus is God, then Mary is the Mother of God. In giving Mary this title, the Church follows the example of Elizabeth, who exclaimed upon seeing Mary, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:43)

Note that this doctrine says more about Jesus than it does about Mary. If Jesus is not God, then Mary is not the Mother of God. By affirming this doctrine, the Church affirms the divinity of Jesus. At the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, the Church officially referred to Mary as the *theotokos* (Gk. "God-bearer"), not to exalt Mary but to combat heresies of the day that denied that Jesus was truly God.

Mary, Immaculately Conceived and Sinless

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception declares that God preserved Mary from the stain of original sin at the moment she was conceived within the womb of her own mother. Moreover, the Church declares that Mary remained sinless her entire life. The first indication of this comes from Luke's gospel:

"And he came to her and said, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!'" (Lk 1:28)

To grasp the full depth of meaning in this passage, we have to look at the original Greek language in which it was written. The Greek word translated as "full of grace" is *kecharitomene*. This is a difficult word to translate. For one thing, in the entire New Testament and the entire Greek Old Testament, it only appears *once*: right here in Luke 1:28. Clearly, something extremely unique is being described.

Secondly, the construction of the word is peculiar. Without becoming too bogged down by Greek grammar, if we look closely at the voice and the verb tense of *kecharitomene*, we find that this word literally means, "You who were and continue to be full of and completed in grace." Blass and Debrunner's *Greek*

Grammar of the New Testament states: "It is permissible, on Greek grammatical and linguistic grounds, to paraphrase *kecharitomene* as completely, perfectly, enduringly endowed with grace."

How remarkable! Mary wasn't just given grace as we all were. She was *filled* with grace, *completed* in grace, *perfected* in grace, and this fullness of grace *persisted*, it continued up to and through the present. Sin and grace are opposed (cf. Rom 5:20–21), and grace saves us from sin (cf. Eph 2:5, 8). Where there is fullness of grace, there is no room for sin.

Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant

Another indication of Mary's sinlessness comes by way of the comparison between Mary and the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was the vessel that contained the word of God on the stone tablets, the manna from heaven, and the rod of Aaron the great High Priest (cf. Heb 9:4).

These were the holiest of all Jewish relics and represented *the very presence of God* to the Jewish people. As such, the container or "ark" that held them had to be made of the purest, most perfect materials. The Ark itself was considered so holy that no one was allowed even to touch it, lest they die (cf. 2 Sam 6:6–7; 1 Chron 13:9–10).

We see in Scripture that there are many parallels between Mary and the Ark (compare Lk 1:35, 39, 41, 43, 56 with Ex 40:35 and 2 Sam 6:2, 9, 11, 16), but space permits us to only address one. We already know what the Ark was built to contain. What was Mary built to contain, but Jesus Christ? And who is He but the new Word of God (cf. Jn 1:1), the Manna from Heaven (cf. Jn 6:51), and the great High Priest (cf. Heb 5:4–5)?

This means that Mary is the Ark of the *New* Covenant, and just as the contents of the previous Ark demanded a perfectly pure vessel, so did Christ, not as a matter of strict necessity (God could have received His human flesh from any woman) but because His holiness demanded it. By preserving Mary from sin, God prepared her to be the pure Ark of the New Covenant.

Mary, Perpetual Virgin

Catholics believe that Mary remained a virgin her entire life. This may seem odd at first, considering that there are many Scripture passages that refer to the "brothers" of Jesus (cf. Mt 12:46; 13:55–56; Mk 3:31; Lk 8:19; Jn 7:1–10; Acts 1:14; Gal 1:19). It is not necessary, however, to believe that these "brothers" were actually His siblings.



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The Greek word for "brother" in these verses is *adelphos*. This word can mean "sibling," but it is also used in Scripture to refer to those of the same nationality, any man or neighbor, persons with like interests, distant descendants of the same parents, persons united by a common calling, mankind, the disciples, and all believers.

Considering the broad meaning of the word, we can just as easily say that these "brothers" of Jesus were related to Him in some other way. Scripture tells us that at least four of them — James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas — were actually Jesus' *cousins*, since their mother was Mary's sister (cf. Mt 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mk 15:47; Jn 19:25).

Also, note that it was the Jewish custom for the eldest son to care for his mother once his father died. When the eldest son died, this responsibility fell on the next son, and so on. Yet, Jesus gave His mother to the Apostle John, not to any of His "brothers" (cf. Jn 19:26–27).

It appears from these peculiar details that Jesus was in fact the only son of Joseph and Mary. And, since the Jews considered it a serious sin to prevent the marital act from bearing fruit (cf. Gen 1:22; 9:1; 38:8–10), we can rightly infer from the lack of other children that Mary remained a virgin.

Mary, Assumed Into Heaven

Typically, when a human being dies, his body is buried or cremated and his soul receives its eternal reward. It is only when Jesus comes again that this soul will receive its body back and experience heaven or hell as a completed human being.

But, in the case of Mary, the Church teaches that, having completed the course of her earthly life, she was assumed (or raised) *body and soul* into heavenly glory. In other words, Mary didn't have to wait for the Resurrection of the Body. She has her body, now, in heaven.

The concept of persons being assumed, body and soul, into their eternal reward is not foreign to Scripture. Enoch (cf. Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5) and Elijah (cf. 2 Kings 2:11–12) experienced this. Paul indicates that a third man may have as well (cf. 2 Cor 12:2–4). The "two witnesses" in the last days (Rev 11:1–12) also were taken up bodily to heaven. Thus, there is precedent for what we believe happened to Mary.

Our first indication that Mary was assumed into heaven comes from the Revelation of John the Apostle. John looked up, expecting to see the Ark. What did he see? A woman clothed with the sun (cf. Rev 11:19–12:1). We have already seen how Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant. That this woman is Mary is further confirmed