

Lesson 4

Mary

The Blessed Virgin Mary has a very special place and role in Salvation History (*the story of mankind's salvation and redemption*) since she is the Mother of God. However, Mary is NOT God and she is NOT worshiped, rather Mary is honored and adored. The Blessed Mother has many titles. Each title helps us to understand her importance in our spiritual life and the life of the Church. Her top ten most popular titles are the following:

10. Queen of Peace
9. Queen of Angels and Saints
8. Our Lady of Perpetual Help
7. Our Lady of Guadalupe
6. Our Lady of Mount Carmel
5. Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal
4. Mother of Mercy
3. The Blessed Mother
2. The Immaculate Conception
1. Mother of God

In the Mystery of the Annunciation, Mary accepts the message delivered by the Archangel Gabriel to become the Mother of God. The archangel tells Mary that she will conceive a child through the Holy Spirit. This fulfills a prophecy found in the Book of Isaiah (*Isaiah 7:14*) which states that the Messiah will be born of a virgin and be a descendant of King David. The child will be named Jesus (*which means "God saves"*).



Mary accepts the message that the Archangel Gabriel announces. Hence, Mary freely chooses to accept the will of God. Mary says “yes” to God; her “yes” is called her “Fiat” (a Latin word that means “let it be done”). In her Fiat, Mary shows complete faith and trust in God. In saying “yes” to becoming the mother of Jesus, she becomes Jesus’ first disciple.

After the Archangel Gabriel leaves Mary, she journeys to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. When the cousins meet, Mary gives her song of praise, called the Magnificat. In the Magnificat, Mary shows her understanding of Jesus’ mission and her role as a disciple. The Magnificat is found in Luke 1:46-55.

The Magnificat

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.
The Mighty One has done great things for me
and holy is his name.
His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.*

In Luke’s Gospel, the visitation to Elizabeth points to Mary as the “New Ark of the Covenant.” The Ark of the Covenant is the place where God would dwell with His people in the Old Testament. Just as the Ark housed God in the Old Testament, Mary’s womb was the dwelling place of Our Lord until his birth.

There are four dogmas (*teachings of the Catholic Church*) of Mary which defines her personal relationship with God and her role in salvation history.

1) Divine Motherhood

Mary's divine motherhood was proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD. The Council attributed to Mary the title, Mother of God. This goes along with the Council's declaration that in Christ there are two natures (*one Divine and one human*) in one person. Indeed, according to the Council the holy virgin is the Mother of God since she gave birth to the Word of God made flesh. The dogma of Divine Motherhood is generally accepted by all Christian denominations.



2) Perpetual Virginity

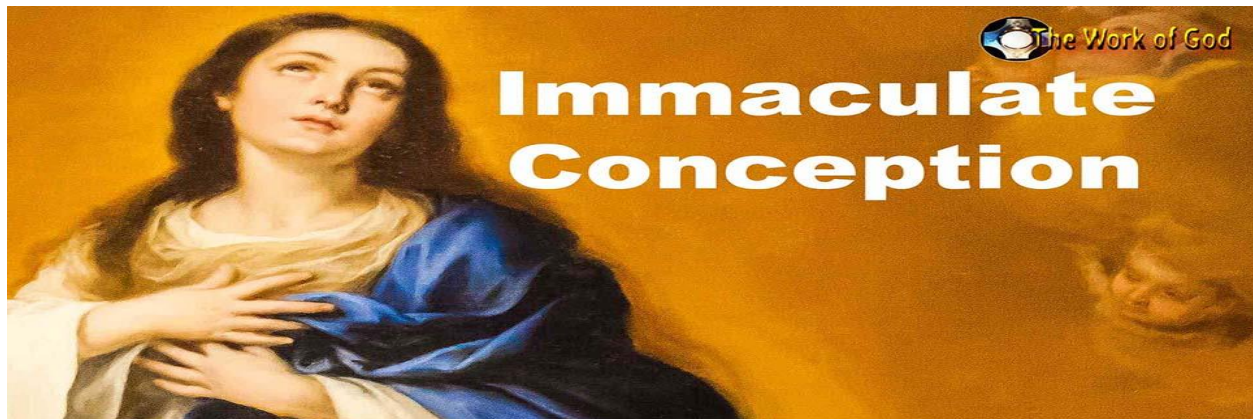
The expression perpetual virginity means that Mary was a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus Christ. Hence, Mary conceived "without any detriment to her virginity, which remained inviolate even after his birth" (*Council of the Lateran, 649*). The Second Vatican Council (*Vatican II*) reiterated the teaching about Mary, the Ever-Virgin, by stating that Christ's birth did not diminish Mary's virginal integrity but sanctified it. The Catechism of the Catholic Church maintains that Jesus Christ was Mary's only child; therefore, the so-called "brothers and sisters" of Jesus are close relations (*such as cousins*).

3) Immaculate Conception

The solemn definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception was proclaimed as an independent dogma by Pope Pius IX in his Apostolic Constitution "Ineffabilis Deus" released on December 8, 1854. Though highlighting a privilege of Mary it in fact stresses the dignity and holiness required to become "Mother of God." The privilege of the Immaculate Conception is the source and basis for Mary's all-holiness as Mother of God. More specifically, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception states "that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege from Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was kept free of every stain of original sin."

Although difficult to explain, original sin provokes disorderliness in thought and behavior, especially with regard to the primacy of God's presence in our life. Consequently, in declaring Mary immaculately conceived, the Church sees in Mary one who never denied

God the least sign of love. Thus, the dogma declares that from her beginning Mary was exceptionally holy and in constant union with the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.



The Immaculate Conception proclaims Mary free from sin at the moment her parents conceived her and teaches that she remained free from all sin her entire life. Mary's willingness to respond to God's call is why we as Catholics hold her in high regard and with such devotion. Her "yes" to becoming the mother of Jesus makes her a model of discipleship. When we respond to God with our own "fiat" we embrace a spirituality that is centered around Christ.

4) The Assumption

This Marian dogma was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950. It states that Mary was elevated or assumed (*body and soul*) into Heaven by the power and grace of God. The dogma states that "Mary, Immaculate Mother of God, after finishing the course of her life on earth, was taken up in body and soul to heavenly glory." Mary was assumed into Heaven, body and soul. When Mary's life on earth ended, she did not ascend into Heaven (*like Jesus*); she was assumed (*or taken*) into Heaven. Mary's Assumption reflects her unique relationship to Jesus as the Mother of God.



This dogma has no direct basis in Scripture. It was nonetheless declared "Divinely revealed," meaning that it is contained implicitly in Divine Revelation. It may be understood as the logical conclusion of Mary's vocation on earth, and the way she lived her life in union with God and her mission. The assumption may be seen as a consequence of Divine Motherhood. Mary is indissolubly linked to her Son on earth and in heaven. Glorified in body and soul, Mary is already in the state that will be ours after the resurrection of the dead.

HONORING MARY

CELEBRATING MARY'S LIFE ALL YEAR

JANUARY ★ 1

Mary, Mother of God

We thank God on this feast day for sending Jesus into the world through His mother, Mary.



MARCH 25

Annunciation of the Lord

We remember how the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that God had chosen her to be Jesus' mother.

MAY 31

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Mary visits Elizabeth (St. John the Baptist's mother), the first to see Mary as the Mother of God.

AUGUST ★ 15

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

When Mary died, we believe she was assumed - body and soul - into Heaven.



AUGUST 22

The Queenship of Mary

We celebrate Mary as the Queen of Heaven, crowned with this title after her Assumption.



SEPTEMBER 8

The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

We celebrate the gift of Mary's birth on this day.

DECEMBER ★ 8

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

We remember how Mary was conceived without original sin, preparing her to bear the Son of God.

DECEMBER 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

We celebrate Mary's appearance to St. Juan Diego in Mexico.



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The Hail Mary Prayer

The Hail Mary is a prayer dedicated to Our Lady. It is founded on Scripture. The first part of the Hail Mary Prayer combines two Scripture verses from the Gospel of Luke while the second portion asks for Mary's intercession or assistance.



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.

In Luke 1:28, the archangel Gabriel appears to Mary and greets her with the expression, "*Hail, Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with you.*" After this greeting, Gabriel presents God's plan of salvation to her and asks if she is willing to be the Mother of God. After this

encounter with Gabriel, Mary makes haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. Upon Mary's arrival, Elizabeth greets her with the following words: "*Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb*" (Luke 1:42).

In the final portion of the Hail Mary, we acknowledge that Mary is the Mother of God and we ask for her prayers. We recognized that we are sinners and in need of God's forgiveness. We also ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for us at the hour of our death so that she can help us fight against the devil. The last hours of our earthly existence are the final moments that Satan works his hardest to pull us away from God. However, when Mary enters the picture, Satan runs in fear. Mary is a very powerful intercessor for us, after all she is the one who got the Lord to perform his first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana. What son would deny his mother's request?

The Rosary

The Rosary is the most popular of all the devotions in the Catholic Church. It is a great way for us to enter into the mysteries of our faith. There are four sets of mysteries to the Rosary: the Joyful Mysteries; the Luminous Mysteries; the Sorrowful Mysteries; and the Glorious Mysteries. The Rosary is a great way to reflect on the lives of Christ and his mother, Mary.

The Joyful Mysteries (Mon. & Sat.)	The Sorrowful Mysteries (Tues. & Fri.)	The Glorious Mysteries (Sun. & Wed.)	The Luminous Mysteries (Thurs.)
1. The Annunciation	1. The Agony in the Garden	1. The Resurrection	1. The Baptism in the Jordan
2. The Visitation	2. The Scourging at the Pillar	2. The Ascension of Our Lord	2. The Wedding at Cana
3. The Birth of Our Lord	3. The Crowning with Thorns	3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit	3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
4. The Presentation in the Temple	4. The Carrying of the Cross	4. The Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven	4. The Transfiguration
5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple	5. The Crucifixion	5. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	5. The Institution of the Eucharist

The chart above illustrates the four sets of mysteries contained in the Rosary. It also presents the typical day of the week each mystery is prayed. Please note that each of the four sets of mysteries contains five mysteries upon which to reflect and pray.

Saint John Paul II added The Mysteries of Light, also known as the Luminous Mysteries, in 2002, which consists of the following: The Baptism in the River Jordan (*Matthew 3:13–16*); The Wedding Feast at Cana (*John 2:1–11*); The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (*Mark 1:14–15*); The Transfiguration (*Matthew 17:1–8*); and The Institution of the Eucharist (*Matthew 26*).

The Prayers Needed to Say the Rosary

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from hence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Hail 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.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

How to Pray the Rosary

1. Make the sign of the cross and then on the crucifix, pray the Apostles' Creed.
2. On the next large bead (*directly above the crucifix*), say the Our Father prayer.

3. On the following three small beads, pray three Hail Marys (*one on each bead: for an increase in **Faith** on the first bead; for an increase in **Hope** on the second bead; and for an increase in **Charity** on the third bead*).
4. On the chain (*after the last of the three Hail Mary beads and before the single large bead*), pray the Glory Be.
5. On the large bead, announce the first mystery and pray the Our Father prayer.
6. Skip the centerpiece medallion, pray one Hail Mary on each of the **ten beads** (*called a “decade”*). After that, pray one Glory Be on the chain before the next large bead.

Although a decade is 10, these 12 prayers (*Our Father, 10 Hail Marys, and the Glory Be*) form a decade of the Rosary.

7. Repeat the process of introducing the Mystery and praying the Our Father on the large, singular bead, one Hail Mary on each of the ten smaller beads, and the Glory Be on the chain for the remaining four decades/mysteries.
8. At the end of your Rosary, make the sign of the cross.



The following diagram presents a visual version of how to pray the Rosary.





Fall asleep praying the Rosary. It is better than counting sheep.



Say it in moments of sadness or spiritual drought.



If you can't pray a whole Rosary at once, break it into parts.



Carry a Rosary in your pocket.



Use each mystery to ask for a particular intention.



Say it while you wait (for example, at the bus stop)

TIPS TO PRAY THE ROSARY EVERY DAY



Pray while you walk and think of the people in your life.



Recite the Rosary while doing chores or while you work out.



Use images and music. The Rosary is a contemplative prayer.



If you're upset, pray for the situation that worries you.