

“All Generations Will Call Me Blessed”: Answering Objections about Mary

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The Marian Dogmas

1. Mary as the Mother of God (*Theotokos*)
2. Mary as a Perpetual Virgin
3. Mary’s Immaculate Conception
4. Mary’s Assumption

1. Mary as the Mother of God

Struggle against Heretic Nestorius

1. Rejects use of *Theotokos* (“Mother of God”) for Mary because
 - a. It makes Mary sound like a goddess
 - b. The Bible never uses the term “mother of God”
2. Nestorius calls Mary *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer)
3. Downplays humanity—Mary was only an incubator?

What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 487).

2. The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Didn’t Jesus Have Brothers and Sisters?

Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brethren *James and Joseph* and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this? (Matthew 13:55–56)

⁵⁵There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Magdalene, and *Mary the mother of James and Joseph*, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. (Matthew 27:55–56)

But standing by the cross of Jesus were *his mother*, and *his mother’s sister*, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And *from that hour the disciple took her to his own home*. (John 19:25–27)

Doesn’t Matthew Say Joseph “Knew” Mary?

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not *until [heos]* she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:25)

And Michal, the daughter of Saul, had not child *until* (Gk *heos*) the day of her death. (2 Sam 6:23 LXX).

... and lo, I am with you always, *until [heos]* the close of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

Mary's Strange Response to the Angel

Mary said to the angel, "How *shall* this be, since *I know not man?*" (Luke 1:34 *pōs estai touto, epei andra ou ginōskō*)

"For if Joseph had taken her to be his wife, for the purpose of having children, why would she have wondered at the announcement of maternity, since she herself would have accepted becoming a mother according to the law of nature?"—St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Generation of Christ*¹

Significance

1. Virgin birth emphasizes Jesus' divinity: he has his source in God alone
2. Mary as New Eve: Eve was a virgin when she disobeyed (Genesis 4:1), Mary is the Virgin who says "yes"
3. *Perpetual* virginity signifies her continuing "yes" to God—gives her whole self to God
4. Icon of the Church: Fruitful Bride, Virgin Mother (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 507)

3. The Immaculate Conception

Isn't Every Person Sinful?

"... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,³⁰ since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. (Romans 3:23, 29–30)

And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,¹¹ *though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad...* (Romans 9:10–11)

Doesn't Mary Need a Savior?

"Mary said, '*My soul magnifies the Lord,*⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in *God my Savior.*⁴⁸... For behold, henceforth *all generations will call me blessed*'" (Luke 1:46–48)

And he came to her and said, "Hail, *full of grace* [*kecharitōmenē*], the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28)

He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ...⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace which he *freely bestowed* [Grk. *echaritōsen*] on us in the Beloved.⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness of our trespasses*, according to the riches of his grace⁸ which he lavished upon us. (Ephesians 1:5–8)

Mary as the New Eve

[The Lord said to the serpent:] *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*" (Genesis 3:15)

The Ark of the Covenant

Three things inside the ark (cf. Hebrews 9:3–5):

1. The Manna: the bread from heaven
2. The staff of the Aaron: the High Priest
3. The Tablets of the Ten Commandments: God's Word Written in Stone

¹ In fact, Numbers 30 seems to be devoted to regulating vows of virginity taken by women and seems to imply that some husbands would have let such vows stand even after marriage. For more see Brant Pitre, "A Biblical Basis for Mary's Virginity," from <http://www.TheSacredPage.com/2008/03/biblical-basis-for-marys-perpetual.html>.

“Then *the cloud* covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because *the cloud abode upon it* [Grk. *episkiazō*], and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” (Exod 40:34-48)



King David Conquers Jerusalem and Brings Up The Ark

And David *arose* and went with all the people who were with him from *Baale-judah*, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts *who sits enthroned on the cherubim*. ³ And they carried the ark of God *upon a new cart*, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving *the new cart* ⁴ with the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. . .

⁶ And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah *put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it*, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God. . . ⁹ And David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, “*How can the ark of the LORD come to me?*” ¹⁰ So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹¹ And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite *three months*; and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

¹² And it was told King David, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.” So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing. . . ¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David *leaping* and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. . . ¹⁸ And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he *blessed* the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. . . (2 Samuel 6:2–18)

The Visitation

In those days Mary *arose* and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of *Judah*, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe *leaped* in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “*Blessed* are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted me, *that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*” ⁴⁴ For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb *leaped* for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” ⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. . .” ⁵⁶ And Mary *remained* with her about *three months*, and returned to her home. (Luke 1:39–46, 56)

Luke 1	2 Samuel 6
“Mary <i>arose</i> and went with haste into the hill country of <i>Judah</i> ” (1:39)	“And David <i>arose</i> and went with all the people who were with him from <i>Baale-judah</i> ” (6:2)
“[Elizabeth] exclaimed with a loud cry, ‘ <i>Blessed</i> are you among women’”(1:42)	“[David] <i>blessed</i> the people in the name of the Lord” (6:18)
“And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (1:43)	“[‘How can the ark of the Lord come to me?’” (6:9)
“For behold... the babe in my womb <i>leaped</i> for joy” (1:44)	“Michal... looked out the window and saw David <i>leaping</i> and dancing before the Lord” (6:16)
“And Mary <i>remained</i> with her about <i>three months</i> ” (1:56)	“And the ark of the Lord <i>remained</i> in the house of Obededom the Gittite <i>three months</i> ” (6:11)

Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be, since I have no husband?”³⁵ And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will *overshadow* [Grk. *episkiazō*] you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. (Luke 1:34–45)

The Ark of the Covenant	Mary (the True Ark of the Covenant)
Ten Commandments: The Word of God in stone	The Word of God Made Flesh
The Staff of the High Priest	The True Heavenly High Priest
The Manna: the Bread from Heaven	The True Bread from Heaven

Early Christians and Mary as “Immaculate”

1. “Immaculate of the Immaculate” (Origen²)
2. “All-Holy” (Hippolytus³)
3. “Inviolable and free from every stain of sin” (Ambrose⁴)

4. The Assumption

The Assumption and Mary as the New Ark

Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and *the ark of his covenant* was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail. And a great portent appeared in heaven, *a woman clothed with the sun*, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; ²*she was with child*. . . ⁵she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne. . . (Revelation 11:19–12:2, 3–5)

“This day the Holy and Singular Virgin is presented in the sublime and heavenly Temple. . . This day the sacred and living Ark of the Living God, who bore within her womb her own Creator, took up her rest within that temple of the Lord that was not made with hands. . . And David her forefather, and her father in God, dances with joy. . .” —John Damascene, *Oration on the Glorious Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God the Ever-Virgin Mary*, 2

Postscript: Can Mary Pray for Us?

The Intercession of the Saints: Mediators in the Mediator

Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were *twenty-four elders*, clad in *white garments*, with *golden crowns* upon their heads. (Revelation 4:4)

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested. . . Be faithful unto death, and *I will give you the crown of life*. (Revelation 3:10)

I saw under the altar the souls of *those who had been slain for the word of God* and for the *witness* [*martyria*] they had borne. . . ¹¹Then they were each given *a white robe* and told to rest a little longer (Revelation 6:9–11).

. . . the *twenty-four elders* fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are *the prayers of the saints*. (Revelation 5:8).

“[The Beast] was allowed *to make war on the saints* and to conquer them.” (Rev 13:7)

² *Homily*, 1.

³ *Against Beron and Helix*, Frag. VIII

⁴ *Commentary on Psalm 118*, 22–30