

# Myths About Mary

## Introduction

- I. What attitude should we have towards Mary, the mother of Jesus?
  - A. She was indeed honored by being selected to bring the Christ into this world (Luke 1:26–35).
  - B. “Among all the women who have ever lived, the mother of Jesus Christ is the most celebrated, the most venerated, the most portrayed, the most honored in the naming of girl babies and churches. Even the Koran praises her chastity and faith. Among Roman Catholics, the Madonna is recognized not only as the Mother of God but also, according to modern Popes, as the Queen of the Universe, Queen of Heaven, Seat of Wisdom and even the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.” (Richard N. Ostling, “Hand-maid or Feminist?,” *Time*, Dec. 30, 1991, p. 62).
  - C. In 431 A.D., at the third Ecumenical Council, in Ephesus, Mary’s title as “Mother of God” was made official and incorporated into prayers.
- II. Some leave the impression that Mary is mentioned on every page of Bible.
  - A. “At the command of Mary all obey, even God. She is omnipotent, for the queen, according to all laws, enjoys the same privileges as the king; and since the son’s power also belongs to the mother, this Mother is made omnipotent by an omnipotent Son” (Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, *The Glories Of Mary*, p. 114).
  - B. “When he was made a bishop in 1958, John Paul emblazoned a golden *M* on his coat of arms and chose as his Latin motto ‘*Totus Tuus*’ (All Yours)—referring to Mary, not Christ. Once he put on St. Peter’s ring, John Paul made Mary’s unifying power a centerpiece of his papal arsenal. He has visited countless Marian shrines during his globe trotting, and invokes the Madonna’s aid in nearly every discourse and prayer that he delivers.” (Ostling, p. 64).
  - C. Pope John Paul II referred to Mary as the “Co-Redemptrix” on at least five different public occasions.
  - D. “But a much more aggressive view of Mary is emerging from feminist circles within the church, emphasizing her autonomy, independence and earthiness.” (Ostling, p. 65).
- III. Mary is never mentioned by name in any New Testament epistle, and only appears four times after the beginning of Christ’s personal ministry:
  - A. At Cana (John 2:1–11).
  - B. At Capernaum (Matt. 12:46; Mk. 3:31–35; Luke 8:19).
  - C. At the Cross (John 19:25).
  - D. In the Upper Room (Acts 1:14).
- IV. In this lesson we will study four prominent false doctrines about Mary.

## I. The Immaculate Conception

- A. Most people confuse “immaculate conception” with “virgin birth.”
- B. “The Immaculate Conception means that Mary, whose conception was brought about the normal way, was conceived in the womb of her mother without the stain of original sin. The essence of original sin consists in the lack of sanctifying grace. Mary was preserved from this defect; from the first instant of her existence she was in the state of sanctifying grace” (Karl Keating, *Catholicism And Fundamentalism*, p. 270).
- C. The Knights Of Columbus publishes a book which speaks of inherited sin and attempts to explain how the “defects” of Adam were “passed on to his children as a man may pass certain qualities by heredity. First of these defects was, of course, the original sin. Adam’s children (and we are all Adam’s children) were born without grace. And all inherited other evils as well...” (*The Apostles’ Creed*, p. 10).
- D. In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared Mary to have been preserved from original sin, by virtue of a special grace of God.
- E. The Bible never speaks of “inherited sin” (Ezek. 18:1–5, 19–20).
  - 1. Mary did not inherit sin, but then again, no one ever does—she needed a Savior (Luke 1:47; Rom. 3:23).
  - 2. Christ is the only sinless one mentioned in the Bible (1 Pet. 2:22).

## II. Perpetual Virginity

- A. “A careful look at the New Testament shows Mary kept her vow and never had any children other than Jesus” (Keating, p. 284).
  - 1. Where did she make this vow?
  - 2. Where is it recorded in the Bible?
- B. “A Catholic and Orthodox tradition 15 centuries old holds that Mary was ever virgin, meaning that she and Joseph never had sex and that the ‘brothers’ of Jesus mentioned in the Bible were cousins.” (Ostling, p. 66).
  - 1. “Accusation has been made by many rationalists and others attacking the perpetual virginity of Mary because of reference in the gospel to the ‘brethren’ of our Lord. This reference denotes solely a group of cousins. It is clear from the gospels that Mary kept her resolve and had no other children after the virginal birth of Christ” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Robert Broderick, editor, p. 601).
  - 2. That a married woman has no children is no proof of her virginity.
  - 3. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t Mary known to be his mother and James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? Aren’t his sisters our neighbors?” (Matt. 13:55–56, NAB).
  - 4. “He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son, whom he named Jesus.” (Matt. 1:25, NAB).

- C. "It is traditional, at the conclusion of the (wedding) ceremony, for the bride to take a bouquet to a side altar and lay it at the feet of a statue of the Virgin, at the same time praying that she might emulate Mary as a wife and a mother" (Keating, p. 259).
1. The Catholic dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity would actually debase and degrade the mother of Jesus, making her a disloyal wife, unfaithful to her marriage obligations.
  2. Not many men would want their wives to "emulate Mary as a wife" if the Catholic claim of her perpetual virginity is true.
  3. Married couples are not to refrain from intercourse, except for short periods of time devoted to fasting and prayer (1 Cor. 7:2-5).
  4. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." (Heb. 13:4).
  5. "If Mary was married to Joseph and Joseph to Mary in appearance only, then they were recreant to each other and to the ordinance of God which made them one. How a Roman Catholic, to whom marriage is a sacrament, can entertain such a notion is an unfathomable mystery. The fact that Mary was miraculously the mother of the Messiah has nothing to do with the question of her privilege and obligation in the holiest of human relationships. Back of this unwholesome dogma are two utterly false ideas: that the marriage relationship is incompatible with holy living, and that Mary is not to be considered a human being under ordinary obligations of human life" (I.S.B.E., Vol. IV, p. 2003).

### III. Our Mediator

- A. Many people mistakenly believe the Catholic Church teaches Mary is on par with Jesus in the role of mediating between God and man.
1. This is not official Catholic doctrine *yet*, but it might soon be!
  2. There is a huge fight within the Roman Catholic Church to change this doctrine to suit modern feminists.

3. "This week a large box shipped from California and addressed to 'His Holiness, John Paul II' will arrive at the Vatican. The shipping label lists a dozen countries—from every continent but Antarctica—plus a number, 40,383, indicating the quantity of signatures inside. Each signature is attached to a petition asking the pope to exercise the power of papal infallibility to proclaim a new dogma of the Roman Catholic faith: that the Virgin Mary is 'Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate for the People of God.'

"Such a move would elevate Mary's status dramatically beyond what most Christians profess. But in the last four years, the pope has received 4,340,429 signatures from 157 countries—an average of 100,000 a month—supporting the proposed dogma. Among the notable supporters are Mother Teresa of Calcutta, nearly 500 bishops and 42 cardinals, including John O'Connor of New York Joseph Glemp of Poland and half a dozen cardinals at the Vatican itself. Nothing like this organized petition drive has ever been seen in Rome. But then, it isn't often that Catholics beg a pope to make an infallible pronouncement.

"If the drive succeeds, Catholics would be obliged as a matter of faith to accept three extraordinary doctrines: that Mary participates in the redemption achieved by her son, that all graces that flow from the suffering and death of Jesus Christ are granted only through Mary's intercession with her son, and that all prayers and petitions from the faithful on earth must likewise flow through Mary, who then brings them to the attention of Jesus. This is what theologians call high Mariology, and it seems to contradict the basic New Testament belief that "there is one God and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). In place of the Holy Trinity, it would appear, there would be a kind of Holy Quartet, with Mary playing the multiple roles of daughter of the Father, mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit." (Kenneth L. Woodward, "Hail, Mary", *Newsweek*, August 25, 1997, p. 49).

- B. Some of this confusion comes when non-Catholics hear Catholics say the Rosary and repeat the required prayer: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus, Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."
- C. What is the Rosary? "This is the name of both a devotion and the chain of beads used for counting the prayers. As a devotion, the Rosary arose in the fifteenth century and became very popular. It was begun by a Dominican preacher, Alan de Rupe (d. 1475) in northern France and Flanders." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 529).

- D. The Catholic Catechism says, “Mary, ever associated with her Son, prays for us with Him. She is not alone in this. The whole community of the blessed in heaven imitate Christ in continuing their concern for us. As we pray for one another upon earth and for the souls in purgatory, so our brothers and sisters in heaven intercede for us. We are united with all of them by the intimate bonds of Christian love. But Mary, our spiritual mother, has an altogether exceptional role in this. Among those redeemed by her Son, her intercessory power is by far the most extensive and effective” (*The Teaching Of Christ*, pp. 228–229).
- E. “Mary is the ark which saves from eternal destruction anyone who takes shelter in it. In the great Deluge even beasts were saved in Noah’s ark. Under the shelter of Mary even sinners are saved.” (Ligouri, p. 53).
  - 1. “God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5, NAB).
  - 2. The Bible never refers to Mary as our “spiritual mother,” nor does it refer to a place known as “purgatory” (cf. Heb. 9:27).

#### **IV. Assumed Into Heaven**

- A. The Catholic Church teaches that after Mary ended her earthly life, she was taken up into heaven in body as well as in soul—this doctrine was “defined” by Pope Pius XII in 1950.
- B. Knowing that no verse in the Bible even hints at this doctrine, Keating, in his chapter on Marian Beliefs, says, “fundamentalists ask, where is the proof from Scripture? Strictly, there is none... The mere fact that the Church teaches the doctrine of the Assumption as something definitely true is a guarantee that it is true” (Keating, p. 275).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. “While he was saying this a woman from the crowd called out, ‘Blest is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!’ ‘Rather’ he replied, ‘blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it.’” (Luke 11:27–28, NAB)
  - A. This woman is truly representative of the attitude of devout Catholics.
  - B. Jesus does not deny Mary was blessed in being His mother, but He insists that more blessed are those who “hear the word of God and keep it.”
- II. Saint Bernard said, “Remember that in this world you are tossed about on a stormy sea; you are not walking on solid ground. Remember that if you don’t want to be lost at sea, you must keep your eyes fixed on this bright star and call on Mary.” (Ligouri, p. 59).
  - A. The Bible tells us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ (Heb. 12:1–2).
  - B. Christ is preeminent, and we are complete in Him (Col. 1:18–19; 2:10).