

Study Guide for *Mary, Mother of God*

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Based on the Ignatius Bible, RSV Catholic edition

Pages will be formatted at 8" x 5" with a type font size
of 9 points to fit in the video sleeve

Chapter 1: The Daughter of Zion

Mary was a typical Jewish girl in many ways. She was specially chosen to be the New Eve, made “full of grace” to bring Jesus—the Word of God—into the world. At the Annunciation (or Annunciation) of the angel Gabriel, Mary said “Yes” to God and became the Mother of God. With the Incarnate Word in her womb, this young teenage girl became the Ark of the New Covenant, and a fulfillment of some very important Old Testament types and prophecies.

Questions for further discussion and study:

Read Genesis 2:1—3:24 for the Old Testament account of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. Where exactly did God place Adam (Gn 2:15)? What did God command, and how did Adam and Eve disobey that command and bring about sin and death? (Gn 2:17; 3:6)? Who was first deceived and thus became a transgressor (1 Tim 2:14)? What were the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden (Rom 5:12; CCC 399, 1008)?

Who specifically is mentioned as a type, a prefiguring of Christ (Rom 5:14)? What is Adam called, and what is Christ called (1 Cor 15:45)? If Christ is the New Adam, who is the New Eve (CCC 411; 975)? What did God promise to Eve, and how does it relate to Mary (Gn 3:15, 20; Rev 12:1, 17; CCC 410, 489)?

What name does Mary possess in the eyes of God (Lk 1:28; CCC 490)? Unfortunately, many Bible translations render this “favored one” instead of “full of grace.” How was Mary saved (Lk 1:47; CCC 492)? What was Mary preserved from at conception and throughout her life (CCC 491; 2853)? What did the Eastern Fathers call Mary (CCC 493)? What does “full of grace” mean (Lk 1:28; CCC 490)? How and when did the Church define the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (CCC 491)?

Should we expect new public revelation (CCC 66)? How are we to think about alleged or authenticated visions, apparitions and other private “revelations” (CCC 67)? How was public revelation transmitted and when did it come to a close (CCC 83)? To what was the deposit of faith delivered (Jude 3; CCC 81, 84–85)? Is this deposit of faith only in a book (2 Thes 2:15; CCC 82, 95)? Who is the caretaker and interpreter of this deposit (1 Tim 3:15; CCC 85, 171)? How were the canon of Scripture, the seven sacraments, and the doctrines of the faith discerned and defined (CCC 66, 94, 1117)?

How do we know Mary obeyed the Law of Moses (Lk 2:21–24)? Look up the word “Annunciation”; what does it mean? How was the announcement made to Mary that she would bear a son, and what was her response (Lk 1:26–38; CCC 148; 494)? How was the birth to come about (Lk 1:35; Mt 1:18; CCC 484–85)? At the Annunciation, what was Mary’s relationship to Joseph (Mt 1:18–20; Lk 1:26–27; CCC 497).



In the Old Testament, what was called the “Daughter of Zion” (Is 52:2; Mt 21:5; CCC 559)? How does Ezekiel describe the actions of Jerusalem (Ezek 16:1–52)? Since the “Daughter of Zion” repeatedly failed God (cp. Jer 5:30–6:2; Lam 2), whom did God choose to personify Jerusalem and bring forth a new people of God (CCC 722; 2619; 2676, 489)?

What does “incarnation” mean (Jn 1:1, 14; Col 1:19; 2:9; CCC 461–62, 464)? What did Mary do soon after the Annunciation (Lk 1:39–40)? Read the account of Mary’s visit with Elizabeth (Lk 1:39–56). When reading Elizabeth’s greeting, do you recognize words preserved in the modern the Rosary? Where are other words found in the Rosary today (Lk 1:28)? As expressed in Mary’s Song, the “Magnificat”, what will all generations proclaim about Mary (Lk 1:48; CCC 971)? How was the Rosary developed (CCC 2678)? How is the Rosary prayed, and what does it mean (CCC 2676–77; 2708)? Why is meditating on the mysteries of Christ through the Rosary not a vain repetition prayers rightly condemned in scripture and Tradition? What does the Bible teach about repeating prayers (Lk 18:1–7; Rev 4:8; Mt 26:39–44)?

Catholics are often challenged: “Where does the Bible say we should pray to dead saints?” But the real more basic question is “Where does the Bible say that saints are dead”? Are those who die in the faith “dead and gone” (Mk 12:26–27; Rev 6:9–10; cp. Lk 9:28–31; CCC 954, 956; 1023)? How are the prayers of the saints presented to God in heaven (Rev 5:8; 8:3)? Why do Catholics love and venerate Mary (Lk 1:48; CCC 971–72; 1172)? There is a vast difference between the adoration (worship) due to God alone, and veneration (honor) paid to saints or sacred images (cp. CCC 2132). What does the Church teach about the proper role of icons and sacred images, such as statues (CCC 476–77; 1159–62)? Notice God’s commands to make and use sacred images in the Old Testament (Ex 25:18–20; Num 21:9; CCC 2130).

What is “typology,” and how does it help us understand the Old and New Testaments (CCC 128–30, 1094)? For example, how is Adam a type or prefiguring of Christ (Rom 5:14)? Augustine wisely said the Old Testament is the New concealed, but the New Testament is the Old revealed (cp. CCC 129). How is the Old Testament instructive in understanding the New Testament (1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15:4; CCC 117.1)?

Where did God’s presence dwell in the Old Covenant (Ex 25:21–22; 40:34–38; Lev 16:2; CCC 2594)? What has become the dwelling place of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit among men (CCC 721)? Where did the Ark of the Covenant reside (Ex 40:21; Num 7:89)? What happened to Moses in the presence of the Ark (Ex 34:33–35)? What overshadowed Mary (Lk 1:35; CCC 697) and what overshadowed the Ark in the Tabernacle (Ex 40:34–35)? What was contained within the Ark of the

Covenant (Deut 10:3–5; Heb 9:4; CCC 2058)? What was within Mary’s womb—the new Ark (Mt 1:23; Lk 1:35; Jn 1:1, 14; CCC 2676)?

Find some parallels between the Old Testament Ark and the New Testament Ark in 2 Samuel 6 and Luke 1. Compare 2 Sam 6:2–4 with Lk 1:39 (same hill country in Judea); 2 Sam 6:14 with Lk 1:41; 2 Sam 6:9 with Lk 1:43; and 2 Sam 6:11 and Lk 1:56. Discuss how Mary is shown to be the Ark of the New Covenant and how Christians should respect her.

Chapter 2: The Doorway

With a baby in her womb, Mary traveled with Joseph to Bethlehem where the prophecy “a virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (Is 7:14) was fulfilled. After escaping to Egypt and living there for a time, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth for the “quiet years” of Jewish family life. Joseph and Mary taught their only son Jesus to pray. She remained a virgin. As Mary was the door for the Son of God to enter the world, she now opens the door to Jesus’ public ministry at the wedding of Cana where she demonstrates her role as intercessor (Jn 2:1–11).

Questions for further discussion and study:

According to prophecy, where was the Messiah to be born (Micah 5:2; Mt 2:6)? Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem (Lk 2:1–5)? Imagine being about nine months pregnant and traveling—probably riding a donkey—over 80 miles through rough terrain. Read the account of Jesus’ birth (Lk 2:6–20). What accommodations did the Holy Family have in Bethlehem (Lk 2:7; CCC 525)?

What had been prophesied about the birth of Jesus (Is 7:14; Mt 1:23; CCC 497)? What does the Church teach about the birth of Jesus (Mt 1:18, 25; CCC 496–97)? What about the challenges to the virginal conception of Jesus (CCC 498)? What had God told the serpent (Gen 3:15; CCC 410, 489)? Who was the woman, and who was “her seed” (Gal 4:4; CCC 484)? Mary delivered Jesus in Bethlehem (Mt 2:1) which means “house of bread.” How does Jesus describe himself (Jn 6:48–51; CCC 1406)?

What action did King Herod take against baby boys to try to eliminate the “the king of the Jews” (Mt 2:16–18)? What action did Joseph take to save Jesus’ life (Mt 2:13–15)? Where did the Holy Family live after returning from Egypt (Mt 2:22–23)? What was Joseph’s and Jesus’ profession (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; CCC 423; 533)? What do we know about Mary, Joseph, and Jesus during the quiet, hidden years in Nazareth (Lk 2:39–52; CCC 531–34; 564)?

What has the Church always taught about the perpetual virginity of Mary (CCC 499)? How are we to understand Mary as Ever-virgin when Scripture mentions “brothers of Jesus” (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; CCC 500)? It is important

to remember the nature of extended families and tribes during ancient times when close relatives were frequently referred to as kin or brothers (e.g., what did Abraham call his nephew Lot, Gen 12:5; 13:8: Hebrew and Greek word for “brother”). For further treatment of this matter, see Suggested Reading.

Read the story of the Wedding of Cana (Jn 2:1–11). What might Jesus’ presence at the wedding reveal about his attitude toward matrimony (CCC 1613)? How does Cana demonstrate Mary’s ministry of intercession (CCC 2618)? What does the Church teach about Mary’s continuing intercession (CCC 969, 975; 2677)? Why do we pray to Mary (CCC 2679)? Notice how St. John uses Mary to “frame” the public ministry of Jesus, placing her at both the beginning and the end, demonstrating her importance (Jn 2:1–11; 19:26–27; CCC 2618).

Chapter 3: Mother of the Church

Mary was the mother of Jesus, and now she is also shown as the mother of the Church, the body of Christ. Never wavering in faith, Mary accompanied Jesus to the cross, lovingly assenting to the immolation of this victim, born to her, suffering with him, and participating in the redemption. In giving Mary to be the mother of the disciple John, Jesus appoints Mary as the Mother of the Church. As a mother, she labors in prayer in the Upper Room with the disciples, and on Pentecost she is again overshadowed by the Holy Spirit—and the Church is born.

Questions for further discussion and study:

What are the Stations of the Cross and how are they used to meditate on the passion of our Savior (CCC 1674; 2669)? Was Mary present at her son’s suffering and death (Jn 19:25)? In the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, Mary joined her Son at the Fourth Station. Imagine a mother’s grief following her son to his execution.

Where was it prophesied that Mary would also suffer (Lk 2:34–35)? What does the *Catechism* teach about Mary joining herself to Jesus’ sacrifice (CCC 964)? Was Mary associated with the redemptive suffering of her Son (CCC 618)? How may all Christians participate in the afflictions of Christ (Col 1:24; CCC 618; 1508)? What did St. Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200) write about Mary’s participation in redemption (CCC 494)? How did Mary contribute to the coming of life (CCC 488; 1172)?

Consider and discuss the following parallels: Two Eves—two sinless Virgins—approached by Two Angels; struggle in Two Gardens under Two Trees with Two Births to bring about Two Creations, with Two Sinless Adams born directly from God who experience Two Deaths because of One Sin. How would you compare two gardens, two trees, and two Eves (Gen 2:9; Jn 19:41; Gal 3:13)? How is Mary involved in the work of salvation (CCC 969)?

What did Jesus say to his mother from the cross (Jn 19:26)? What did he say to John (Jn 19:27)? How does Mary's motherhood extend to all believers (Rev 12:17; CCC 963; 2674; 2853)? Why do we ask Mary to pray for us (CCC 2677)?

Mary had wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes at his birth (Lk 2:7) and was now attending him at his death. Who do you think wrapped Jesus in his burial shroud?

Before his Ascension, what did Jesus command the disciples (Acts 1:4–5)? How many gathered in the Upper Room, and who was among them (Acts 1:12–14; CCC 726)? In addition to being the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and mother of Jesus, what else was Mary (CCC 963, 973)? Mary had been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation. How did Mary labor in prayer—being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit again—to help bring about the birth of the Church at Pentecost (CCC 965)? Why was Mary's presence in the Upper Room at Pentecost so important, in reality and symbolically (CCC 726)? How were Mary's prayers important (CCC 2617)?

Of what is Mary a type or realization (CCC 967, 2679)? How does Mary represent the Church (CCC 829)? Since Mary has been assumed into heaven, what hope does this give us (CCC 972)?

Chapter 4: Queen of Heaven

The apostle John took Mary into his own home and, eventually, traveled to Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Having made a promise to his Lord, it is most certain that John would take Mary with him to Ephesus, as affirmed by the Council of Ephesus in 431. It is widely held that Mary returned to Jerusalem and died there. At the end of her earthly life she was assumed into heaven. Historically in Israel, the king's mother reigned as the Queen Mother. So, it is fitting that sinless Mary be assumed into heaven to reign as Queen with her Son, King Jesus, who sits on the eternal throne of David. She is a model of faith and charity, and the realization of the Church. From heaven she intercedes for us, her children.

Questions for further discussion and study:

What did Jesus commission the Apostles to do (Mt 28:18–20; Acts 1:8)? The apostles eventually spread out, taking the Gospel to all parts of the world. St. Irenaeus (c. 120–c. 200) writes, “John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”¹ Jesus entrusted Mary to John. What do tradition and history inform us about Mary's journey to Ephesus with John?

¹ *Against Heresies* 3, 1, 1 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:414.

Pope Leo XIII was very interested in the discovery of Mary's House in Ephesus. In 1914, Pope Pius X granted a plenary indulgence to pilgrims visiting the house. Pope Pius XII declared the house an official shrine. Pope John XXIII attempted a visit to Mary's house while in Ephesus but was unable because of poor travel conditions. In 1967, the shrine was visited by Pope Paul VI and again in 1979 by Pope John Paul II. What does this papal attention suggest?

To get an idea of life in Ephesus during the first century, read Acts 19:1–41.

What is heresy (CCC 2089)? What is heresy's cause and fruit (CCC 817), and how were we warned against it (2 Pet 2:1)? What was the issue in most early heresies (CCC 464)? Church councils have often been called to address heresy. What is the biblical prototype for future Church Councils (Acts 15:1–29)? What is a Church Council (CCC 884)?

What did Elizabeth call Mary (Lk 1:43; CCC 495, 2677)? What Church Council was held in Ephesus and why (CCC 466)? What title was affirmed for Mary? Some groups object to the Catholic teaching that Mary is the Mother of God, thinking it implies that Mary preexisted God and gave birth to God the Father or the Trinity. This objection is a misunderstanding of ancient Catholic Christian teaching. What kind of person is Jesus (CCC 626)? If Jesus is a divine person (Jn 1:1; 14; CCC 480–81, 483) and Mary gave birth to him, then Mary truly is the Mother of God—the mother of a divine person (CCC 495). When the Council of Ephesus convened in 431 at the Church of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus, the Church proclaimed Mary to be the *Theotokos*. What does the title *Theotokos* mean (CCC 466; 495)?

The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the “Seven Wonders of The Ancient World”. What was the Ephesians' attitude toward this Greek virgin-fertility goddess (Acts 19:34–36)? Do you think it was coincidental that Mary, the true virgin and mother, came to live in the city that worshiped the false virgin and fertility goddess? Consider how God's truth penetrates history and exposes the falsehood of paganism. Remember that the very emphasis of the Council of Ephesus in 431 was that Jesus had two natures: divine and human. His divine nature is eternally from his Father in Heaven; his human nature derives from Mary his fully human mother. Mary was not a goddess; she was truly human and, thus, the source for Jesus' human nature. The veneration of Mary was not derived from pagan sources. Discuss how understanding the Marian doctrines expose the pagan practices of idolatry as a lie.

Are Marian doctrines primarily about Mary or primarily about her Son? What is the source of the Church's teaching on Mary, and what do the Marian teachings do for our understanding and faith in Christ (CCC 487)? How are the Marian dogmas similar to a moat around a castle?



Acts 15 recounts a council of the Church at which the apostles gathered around the year A.D. 49. Mary was probably between 60 and 70 years old at the time and likely returned to Jerusalem with John. What happened to Mary at the end of her earthly life (CCC 974)? Even though it is widely taught that Mary died (as John Paul II affirms), what was Mary preserved from at her death (CCC 2853)? Are there biblical precedents for people being assumed into heaven (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11–12)? Which Pope pronounced this infallible definition and what did it say? (CCC 966) How is this another example of doctrinal development?

To what island was John exiled later in life (Rev 1:9)? What did John see while in exile (Rev 1:1)? What did John see in heaven (Rev 11:19—12:1)? Who was “the Woman” who was seen in heaven (CCC 1138)? How do we know the “Woman” is Mary (Rev 12:5; CCC 2853)? Remembering that chapter divisions were added to the Bible much later, why do you think John mentions the “Woman” in context with the Ark (Rev 11:19—12:1ff.)? Where else in the Bible do we see a man, a woman, and a serpent (Gen 3:1–6)? Notice how the Bible begins with a man, a woman, and a serpent and ends with a man, a woman, and a serpent—the dragon or the devil. The three figures are real in Genesis, The three figures are real in Revelation; Mary, the man, and the serpent are also real in Revelation.

Almost a thousand years before Christ, how did King Solomon honor his mother (1 Kings 2:19)? In the kingdom of Judah, notice how the king’s mother, not his wife, was the queen (e.g., 2 Kings 10:13; Jer 13:18; 29:2). Where did Jesus go after he ascended from the earth in Acts 1:9–11, and what position was he given (Dan 7:13–14)? Who holds the key—the authority—of the Davidic Kingdom now (Rev 3:7)? Who is the mother of King Jesus (Lk 1:30–33)? Based on Jewish custom and biblical history, what position does Mary now hold (cp. CCC 966)? Discuss why it is appropriate that Mary was assumed into heaven as the Queen alongside her Son the Eternal King.

How do we relate to Mary today (CCC 2675)? How might Mary’s directive to the servants in John 2:5 apply to us as servants of Christ? Who is the mother of the Church, and where does the Bible say we are her offspring (Rev 12:17; CCC 501, 2853)? What does Scripture teach about honoring a mother (Ex 20:12; Sirach 3:11, Eph 6:2)? How might CCC 2200 apply? What should all Christians be doing (Lk 1:48; CCC 971)? What is Mary doing for us now (CCC 969, 2618)? Does Mary’s intercession diminish or threaten the mediation of Christ (CCC 970)?

The Catholic Challenge

Having viewed *Mary, the Mother of God* and gone through the study guide, you are now equipped to understand better Mary and her wonderful role in salvation history from a Catholic, biblical, and historical perspective. Be prepared to answer some common—and sometimes tough!—questions

about Mary and the Marian doctrines as you find here in The Catholic Challenge.

1. Why do Catholics believe Mary was conceived without sin (Immaculate Conception)? In Romans 3:23 we are told all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Why were Jesus and Mary exceptions?
2. In Luke 1:47, Mary rejoices in God “my Savior.” If Mary was free from the stain of sin, why did she need a savior?
3. How was Mary similar to and different from other teenage girls her age?
4. In 1 Tim 2:5 we are told there is only one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus. Why do Catholics pray to Mary—or ask Mary to pray for us?
5. Why do Catholics call Mary “blessed” and honor her with special devotions and prayers, like the *Hail Mary* and the Rosary?
6. Why is the Rosary not vain repetition as condemned by Jesus in Matthew 6:7?
7. What is Mary’s role in God’s plan of salvation?
8. Why is Mary called the Ark of the New Covenant, and what is the significance of this title?
9. How is Mary’s role prefigured in Genesis, and why is she called the New Eve?
10. We are told in Matt 13:55-56 that Jesus had brothers and sisters. How can that be if Mary was a perpetual virgin?
11. Do Catholics worship and adore Mary? What is the difference between veneration or honor, and worship or adoration?
12. Why do Catholics make icons and statues of Mary and the saints?
13. What should be a Catholic’s attitude toward various types of Marian apparitions?
14. How can Mary be called the “Mother of God?” Doesn’t that imply she existed before God? What is the importance of this title?
15. What is the nature of our relationship with the Mother of God?
16. Why do Catholics believe that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven and specifically celebrate this event on August 15 each year?

17. Explain the biblical basis for Mary being the Queen of Heaven. How is she Mother and Queen? What is she doing in heaven?

For Further Reading

17 Papal Documents on the Rosary (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1980).

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