

Myths About Mary

Introduction. God sternly warned man not to add to His word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). The Pharisees broke this commandment and added oral tradition, which to them possessed the same authority as inspired teaching (Matthew 15:2, 6). When men are willing to do this, it can make truth virtually unrecognizable. This has been the case with Mary and the Roman Catholic Church.

The following quotes show how venerated Mary is among Catholic leaders and scholars. Richard N. Ostling, said, "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 Universes, Queen of Heaven, Seat of Wisdom and even the Spouse of the Holy Spirit" ("Handmaid or Feminist?" Time, Dec. 30, 1991, p. 62). In A.D. 431, at the third Ecumenical Council, Mary's title as "Mother of God" was made official and incorporated into prayers. "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 Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*, p. 114). "When he was made a bishop in 1958, John Paul II 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 II 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).

Mary was indeed honored by being selected to bring the Christ into this world (Luke 1:26-35). However, she is never mentioned by name in any New Testament epistle, and only appears four times after the beginning of Christ's personal ministry: Cana (John 2:1-11), Capernaum (Matthew 12:46; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19), the cross (John 19:25), and the Upper Room (Acts 1:14). Should we follow the Roman Catholic view of Mary? In this lesson we will look at four prominent Catholic doctrines about Mary and compare them to the Bible.

I. Immaculate Conception

- A. Karl Keating wrote, "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" (Catholicism And Fundamentalism, p. 270).

- B. The Knights Of Columbus publishes a book which speaks of inherited sin and attempted 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). In 1854, Pope Pius IX declared Mary to have been preserved from original sin, by virtue of a special grace of God.
- C. The Bible never speaks of "inherited" or "original sin" (Ezekiel 18:1-5, 19-20).
 - 1. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "original sin" claims that mankind has inherited the "human nature deprived of original holiness and justice" which is "transmitted by propagation to all mankind."
 - 2. Mary did not inherit a sinful nature, but then again, no one ever does — she needed the Savior just like everyone else because she sinned (Luke 1:47; Romans 5:12; cp. Genesis 8:21; Psalm 58:3; Ephesians 2:3).

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. When did she make this vow?
 - 2. Where is it recorded in the Bible?
- B. A Catholic and Orthodox tradition states that Mary was always a virgin, meaning that she and Joseph never had sexual relations and that the "brothers" of Jesus mentioned in the Bible were cousins.
 - 1. "Accusation has been made by many rationalists and other 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, p. 601).
 - 2. Two issues are involved. First, a married woman that has no children is no proof of her virginity. Second, the Bible is clear in presenting Mary being a virgin and that she had more children other than Jesus (Matthew 1:25; Luke 1:34; 13:55-56). The word for "brethren" in Matthew 13:55 occurs almost 350 times in the New Testament. When it does not mean a spiritual relationship of

Jews or Christians, it always means siblings who share one or both parents.

- 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. Not many men would want their wives to "emulate Mary as a wife" if the Catholic claim of her perpetual virginity were true.
 2. Married couples are not to refrain from the physical relationship, except for short periods of time devoted to fasting and prayer (1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4).
 3. "If Mary was married to Joseph and Joseph to Mary in appearance only, then they were cowardly 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" (ISBE, Vol. IV, p. 203).

III. Equal Mediation

- 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 concept never formed a part of the dogma of the Church. There is a huge fight within the Roman Catholic Church to change this doctrine to suit modern feminists.
 2. In the early 1990s more than six million signatures were gathered from 148 countries, including those of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, and 41 other cardinals and 550 bishops, petitioning John Paul II to use Papal infallibility to declare Mary as "Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix of All Graces and Advocate for the People of God."
 3. Kenneth L. Woodward writes, "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 ... 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" ("Hail, Mary", Newsweek, August 25, 1997, p. 49).

4. 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 Training Of Christ, p. 228-229).
 5. "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" (Liguori, p. 53).
- B. This is in direct conflict with the biblical fact that we have one mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). Furthermore, Bible never refers to Mary as our "spiritual mother," nor does it refer to a place known as "purgatory" (cp. Hebrews 9:27).

IV. Heavenly Assumption

- 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. He wrote, "'The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory" (Munificentissimus Deus, p. 44).
- B. Knowing that no verse in the Bible even hints at this doctrine, Keating in his chapter on Marian Beliefs, says, "Fundamentalism asks 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. Luke 11:27 is truly representative of the attitude of devout Catholics. Jesus does not deny Mary was blessed in being His mother, but there are those more blessed than she (v.28).

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said, "Remember that in this world you are tossed about on a want to be lost at sea, you must keep your eyes fixed on this bright star and call on Mary" (Liguori, p. 59). This is false. The Bible tells us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ (Hebrews 12:1-2). Christ is preeminent, and we are complete in Him (Colossians 1:18-19; 2:10), not His earthly mother.