

What do Catholics believe about the Virgin Mary? Why is she considered so important to Christianity?

a) Mary is the Mother of Jesus, the "Mother of the Lord," and thus the Mother of God. (Luke 2:7; Luke 1:43)

b) Mary is our spiritual Mother, since Jesus gave her to us from the Cross. Since she is the Mother of Christ, she is also the Mother of Christ's Body, the Church.

"When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' (John 19:26-27).

c) Mary was the first Christian. (Luke 1:26-38)

d) Mary always leads us to her Son. "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).

e) Jesus worked his first public miracle at the request of his Mother. (John 2:1-11)

f) Mary is a reflection of God's beauty and glory.

"And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Luke 1:46-48).

"For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness" (Wisdom 7:26).

g) Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant - just as the original Ark contained the tablets of the Old Covenant, the new Ark contained the Word of God himself - the divine personification of the New Covenant.

"Arise, O Lord, and go to thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy might" (Psalm 132:8)

"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; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery" (Revelation 11:19 - 12:2).

h) Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and remained a Virgin throughout her entire life (Perpetual Virginity).

i) By a singular privilege of God, Mary was conceived without original sin (Immaculate Conception), and as the "new Eve" she never committed even a minor sin throughout her

entire life. She was "saved in advance" so that the Lord could enter the world without being defiled.

"You are all fair, my love; there is no flaw in you" (Song of Songs 4:7).

"My dove, my perfect one, is only one, the darling of her mother, flawless to her that bore her" (Song of Songs 6:9).

j) Because of her sinlessness, Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven at the end of her life (Assumption of the Virgin Mary).

"My beloved speaks and says to me: 'Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone... Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away'" (Song of Songs 2:10-11, 13).

"Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Depart from the peak of Amanah, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards" (Song of Songs 4:8).

k) Mary is the first of the Co-Redeemers because she cooperated in God's plan of Redemption by agreeing to becoming the Mother of the Lord, knowing the pain it would cause her, and by sharing in the sufferings of Jesus throughout his entire life.

"And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word'" (Luke 1:38).

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church..." (Colossians 1:24).

"For the infant Church was the fruit of the Cross and Resurrection of her Son. Mary, who from the beginning had given herself without reserve to the person and work of her Son, could not but pour out upon the Church, from the very beginning, her maternal self-giving. After her Son's departure, her motherhood remains in the Church as maternal mediation: interceding for all her children, the Mother cooperates in the saving work of her Son, the Redeemer of the world. In fact the Council teaches that the 'motherhood of Mary in the order of grace... will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect.' ... Mary's cooperation shares, in its subordinate character, in the universality of the mediation of the Redeemer, the one Mediator" (Pope John Paul II, Mother of the Redeemer).

l) In virtue of her complete union with God as daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, and spouse of the Spirit, Mary maternally mediates between humanity and God.

"For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who misses me injures himself; all who hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:36).

"Though she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the man who lives with wisdom" (Wisdom 7:27-28).

"This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix. This, however, is so understood that it neither takes away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source" (Lumen Gentium 62).

m) Mary is our greatest Advocate in heaven, who along with the other saints receives our prayers and petitions and intercedes for us before the throne of God (Tobit 12:15, Revelation 5:8).

n) Mary spent more time with Jesus than any other human being. She nurtured and instructed Jesus from his infancy until the beginning of his Public Mission.

"And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:51-52).

o) Mary was crucified in her heart at the foot of the Cross, where she watched her Son die; she cooperated with God's plan until the bitter end.

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

"So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25).

p) Catholics do not worship Mary but honor her, just as we honor other Saints (Code of Canon Law 1186). Adoration is reserved for God alone. By honoring Mary, we imitate Jesus

by fulfilling the 4th Commandment to "honor your father and your mother" (Deuteronomy 5:16).

(Deuteronomy 5:16; Tobit 12:15; Psalm 132:8; Proverbs 8:22-36; Ecclesiasticus 24:1-22; Song of Songs 2:10-13, 4:7-8, 6:9-10; Wisdom 7:25-28; Isaiah 60:13; Jeremiah 3:15-16; Luke 1:26-38, 1:41-49, 2:7, 2:51-52; John 2:1-11, 19:25-27; Colossians 1:24; Revelation 5:8, 11:19-12:2)

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