

THE VIRGIN MARY



Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the gift of your Blessed Mother to the Church. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit that we may imitate her total commitment to you. May we give birth to you in our hearts as she gave birth to you in the world. We ask this in your most holy Name. Amen.

Scripture Reading *Luke 1:26-38*

Luke's Gospel provides the birth of Jesus from Mary's perspective. In today's reading, we hear the kerygmatic announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary that she will be the Mother of God as she is full of grace.

What is meant by Catholics honoring the Virgin Mary?

- An examination of terms:
 - **Latria:** worship reserved only for God, which is best translated as adoration. Adoration is different from all other forms of honor because it consists of a complete self-emptying before the Divine and is a devout recognition of God's awesome power.
 - **Dulia:** honor due to those who are virtuous, which comes from the Greek word for servant. The Church honors the saints as servants to God, who adored Him through their lives.
 - **Hyperdulia:** honor paid to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is full of grace and the embodiment of a servant of the Lord. "May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).
- The Church honors Mary because she points us to the Lord. "His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you'" (John 2:5).
- The Church honors Mary because she is the Mother of God and the mother of all disciples, "Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother'" (John 19:27).
- The Church honors Mary because "Mary is the Church as it dawns in a single person" (J. Corbon, *The Wellspring of Worship*).

Incarnating THE KERYGMA

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How is Mary the Mother of God?

- At the Council of Ephesus, Mary was named the *theotokos*, of God bearer, because she is truly the Mother of God, since she conceived the Son of God.
- The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work. It is also seen as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14.
- As the Mother of God, Mary is also the mother of all Christians.
- Mary's perpetual virginity gives purpose to Christ:
 - Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation – Jesus only has God as Father.
 - Jesus becomes the beginning of the new creation.
 - The spousal relationship to God is perfectly fulfilled in Mary.
- Mary's virginity is a sign of her faith, giving herself as an undivided gift to God's will.
- Mary becomes a symbol of the Church: through Baptism, the Church becomes mother, but remains pure to the faith.

What is the Immaculate Conception?

- The **Immaculate Conception** is the belief that by the grace of God, Mary remained free from sin her entire life, including the stain of original sin. This is a grace given to Mary so that she was able to give her full consent to God at the Annunciation.
- The belief in the Immaculate Conception comes from the greeting of the angel: "Hail, Mary, full of grace" (Luke 1:28).
- "Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son" (CCC, 494).
- The Immaculate Conception has been an honored belief for Mary throughout the history of the Church, but was declared an infallible dogma of the Church in 1854.
- The Immaculate Conception of Mary gives hope to all Christians who are washed free from sin in the waters of Baptism.

What is the Assumption?

- The **Assumption** is the mystery that Mary was taken to heaven body and soul at the end of her natural life, so that she might be fully in union with her Son.
- The Assumption is Mary's participation in the Resurrection and the hopefully anticipation of our resurrection at the second coming.
- Through the Assumption, Mary remains uninterruptedly connected with both the Blessed Trinity and her children on earth.
- The Assumption was declared an infallible dogma of the Church in 1950.

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Why do Catholics pray the Hail Mary?

- The **Hail Mary** is a prayer based in Scripture asking the Blessed Mother to intercede for us to God.
- The first part of the Hail Mary comes from the salutation of the Angel Gabriel and the greeting from St. Elizabeth.
 - This part of the prayer gives God praise for the gifts that he gave to Mary and will share with us.
- The second part of the prayer was added between the 11th and 15th centuries.
 - This part of the prayer asks Mary to intercede for us to God, as we would ask others to intercede for us.

What is the Rosary?

- One of the most popular devotions is praying the **Rosary**. The Rosary holds a unique position because of its relationship to the mysteries of Christ and the faith of the Virgin Mary.
 - Many of the appearances of Mary, especially at Lourdes and Fatima, have been associated with the praying of the Rosary. Also, numerous popes and saints have urged the faithful to pray the Rosary.
 - The popularity of the Rosary has been attributed to St. Dominic and the Dominican Order. It grew out of the laity's desire to have 150 prayers to match the 150 psalms chanted by the monks in ancient monasteries. The action of praying with beads evolved from this practice. Originally, people would pray the Our Father using a set of beads. Today, people also use Rosary beads to pray the Divine Mercy chaplet.
 - The Rosary uses Scripture based prayers and the repetition of 10 Hail Mary's to lead us to restful and contemplative prayer related to the mystery. It helps us to enter into the silence of our hearts where Christ's Spirit dwells.