



Roman Catholic Mariology

This article is about Roman Catholic perspectives; for general Christian views, see Mariology.


A series of articles on
Roman Catholic Mariology

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • v • t • e^[1]

Roman Catholic Mariology is the systematic study of the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of her place in the economy of salvation, within the theology of the Catholic Church.^{[2][3][4]}

In the Catholic perspective, Mary has a precise place in the plan of salvation and a special place within tradition and devotion.^{[5][6][7]} She is seen as having a singular dignity, and receives a higher level of veneration than all other saints.^[8] Roman Catholic Mariology thus studies not only her life but also the veneration of her in daily life, prayer, hymns, art (where she has been a favorite topic), music, and architecture in modern and ancient Christianity throughout the ages.^{[9][10][11]}

The four dogmas of Perpetual virginity, Mother of God, Immaculate Conception and Assumption form the basis of Mariology. However, a number of other Catholic doctrines about the Virgin Mary have been developed by reference to sacred scripture, theological reasoning and Church tradition. The development of Mariology is ongoing and since the beginnings it has continued to be shaped by theological analyses, writings of saints, and papal statements, e.g. while two Marian dogmas are ancient, the other two were defined in the 19th and 20th centuries; and papal teachings on Mary have continued to appear in recent times.^{[12][13][14]}

In parallel to the traditional views, since the late 19th century, a number of other perspectives have been presented as a challenge to Roman Catholic Mariology. These have ranged from feminist criticisms that consider the image of Mary a construct of the "patriarchal mindset" which limits equal opportunity for women, to other Christian views that see Mariology as unbiblical and a denial of the uniqueness of Christ as redeemer and mediator to modern psychological interpretations of Mary as the equivalent of mythical Goddesses ranging from Diana to Kwan Yin.^[15]

Study of Mary and her place in the Church

Context and components

The study of Mary and her place in the Catholic Church has been undertaken from a number of perspectives and within a number of contexts, and in his address to the 2012 Mariological congress, Pope Benedict XVI stated that this study must be "understood and deeply examined from different and complementary viewpoints": the path of truth (*via veritatis*) remains for ever valid, and the path of beauty (*via pulchritudinis*) and the path of love (*via amoris*) should also be followed in this study.^[16] Pope Benedict XVI has also emphasized that the study of Mary can not be performed in isolation from other disciplines and that "Mariology can never be purely mariological" but is inherently related to the study of Christ and of the Church, and expresses the inner coherence of these disciplines.^[17]

Pope Benedict XVI has stated that Marian studies have three separate characteristics: first personalizing the Church so it is not seen just as a structure but as a person, secondly the incarnational aspect and the relation to God, and third Marian piety which involves the heart and the emotional component.^[18]

Mary's position in Church can be compared to the aspect of the Petrine office in a dual sense.^{[19][20]} This perspective on the duality of the roles of Mary and Peter highlights the subjective holiness of the heart and the objective holiness of the structure of the Church. In this duality the Petrine office logically examines the charisms for their theological soundness, while the Marian dual provides a balance in the spiritual and emotional sense via the service of love that the office can never encompass. Mariology and the doctrine of office are thus not "side chapels" in Roman Catholic teachings, but are central and integrating elements of it.

Maximalism and minimalism

Mariology is a field in which deeply felt pious beliefs of the faithful and hagiography may conflict with theological and critical historical reviews of beliefs and practices.^[21] This conflict was recognized as early as the year 1300 by William of Ware who described the tendency of some believers to attribute almost everything to Mary.^[22] Bonaventura warned against Marian maximalism. "One has to be careful as to not to minimize the honour of our Lord, Jesus Christ."^[23] However, both minimalist and maximalist have always seen in Mary a sign of the Church and viewed her as a model for all Catholics.^[24] In the 20th century, Pope Pius XII, "the most Marian Pope in Church history"^[25] warned against both exuberant exaggerations and timid minimalism in the presentation of Mary.^{[26][27]} The Vatican II dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* was specifically written in 1964 to avoid both Marian maximalism and minimalism.^{[28][29]} Pope John Paul II was also careful to avoid both maximalism and minimalism in his Mariology and avoided taking personal positions on issues which were subject to theological debate.^[30]

Mariology and Christology



Christ and Mary, mosaic, Chora Church, 12-14th century. "To Christ through Mary", taught by St. Louis de Montfort, is a key theme in Roman Catholic Mariology.^[31]

Mariology (the study of Mary) has been related to Christology (the study of Christ) and in the Roman Catholic theological and papal writings has been viewed as interwoven with the mystery of Christ.^[32] Pope John Paul II discussed the "precise place of Mary" in the plan of salvation in the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* and stated: "Following the line of the Second Vatican Council, I wish to emphasize the special presence of the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and his Church. For this is a fundamental dimension emerging from the Mariology of the Council".

Roman Catholic theologians have also explored the interwoven natures of Mariology and Christology.^[1] Pope

Benedict XVI characterized the relationship by stating that "Christology and Mariology are inseparably interwoven" from their very beginnings.^[33] In his view Mariology underscores the nexus of the mysteries of Christology and ecclesiology, and reflects they are intrinsically interweaved.^[1]

Early Christians and numerous saints focused on this connection^[34] and popes highlighted the inner link between Marian doctrines and a fuller understanding of Christological themes.^{[35][36]} Given the Catholic perspective that the Church lives in its relation to Christ, being the Body of Christ, it also has a relation to his mother, whose study is the subject of Roman Catholic Mariology.^[37] In his 1946 publication *Compendium Mariologiae*, Mariologist Gabriel Roschini explained that Mary did not only participate in the birth of the physical Jesus but also, with conception, she entered with him into a spiritual union - the divine salvation plan being not only material but including a permanent spiritual unity with Christ.^[38] This was echoed by Pope Saint Pius X who in *Ad Diem Illum* stated: "there is no more direct road than by Mary for uniting all mankind in Christ."^[39]

In Roman Catholic theology the study of Mary, while contributing to the study of Christ, is also a separate discipline in its own right, with an understanding of the figure of Mary contributing to a fuller understanding of who Christ is and what he did.^{[40][41]} The Congregation for Catholic Education has characterized the situation as follows: "The history of theology shows that an understanding of the mystery of the Virgin contributes to a more profound understanding of the mystery of Christ, of the Church and of the vocation of man."^[42] Referring to this, Cardinal Raymond Burke stated that the promotion of a fuller knowledge of the Virgin Mary is the "constant work of the Church".^[43]

History and development

The history of Mariology goes back to the 1st century. Early Christians focused their piety at first more upon the martyrs around them; but following that they saw in Mary a bridge between the old and the new.^[44] The earliest recorded prayer to Mary, the *sub tuum praesidium*, is dated in its earliest form to around the year 250.

In Egypt the veneration of Mary had started in the 3rd century and the term Theotokos was used by Church Father Origen.^[45] In the 5th century, the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus declared Mary as *Theotokos* (God-bearer).^[46] Churches dedicated to Mary were constructed across the Christian world, among the most famous being Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.^[47] After the 5th century, the celebration of the Assumption of Mary began to spread across the Christian world.^[48] The Middle Ages saw growth and development for Mariology and prayers to Mary such as the *Ave Maria*, and chants such as *Ave Maris Stella* and the *Salve Regina* emerged and became staples of monastic plainsong.^{[49][50]}

The Renaissance period witnessed a dramatic growth in Marian art.^[51]

Masterpieces by Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael were produced in this period. In the 16th century, the Council of Trent confirmed the Catholic tradition of paintings and artworks in churches, resulting in a great development of Marian art and Mariology during the Baroque Period.^[1] During the Reformation, the Catholic Church defended its Mariology against Protestant views. With the victory at Battle of Lepanto (1571) accredited to her, it "signified the beginning of a strong resurgence of Marian devotions."^[52] The baroque literature on Mary experienced unforeseen growth. More than 500 pages of Mariological writings were published during the 17th century alone.^[53]

Popes have been an important element in shaping both the theological and the devotional aspects of the Roman Catholic perspective on the Virgin Mary.^[54] Theologically, popes have highlighted the inner link between Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, the encyclicals *Mystici Corporis*, *Lumen Gentium* and *Redemptoris Mater* being examples. Furthermore, popes have fostered the veneration of the Blessed Virgin through the promotion of Marian devotions, feast days, prayers, initiatives, the acceptance and support of Marian congregations, and, the formal recognition of Marian apparitions such as in Lourdes and Fátima.^{[55][56]} Popes have at times followed on paths initiated by previous popes, for instance popes Alexander VII and Clement X both promulgated the veneration of the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, a concept which was embraced by pope John Paul II in the 20th century as the Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.^{[57][58][59]}

The two Marian dogmas of Immaculate Conception and Assumption were established by popes in the 19th and 20th century. In 1904 at the 50th anniversary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Saint Pope Pius X with the encyclical *Ad diem illum* encouraged the entire Church to honor the Virgin Mary.^[60] Pope Pius XII issued the Dogma of the Assumption and the Second Vatican Council declared Mary to be the *Mother of the Church*.^[61] In his 2002 Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope John Paul II emphasized Saint Louis de Montfort's approach of viewing the study of Mary as a path to gaining a better understanding of the mystery of Christ.



Santa Maria Antiqua, in the Forum Romanum, 5th century, seat of Pope John VII.

Dogmatic teachings

Marian Roman Catholic dogmas present infallible Church teachings about Mary and her relation to Jesus Christ, and reflect the role of Mary in the economy of salvation.^[62]

De Fide Definita or *De Fide Credenda* doctrines have the highest degree of dogmatic certainty. These doctrines come in several forms, namely the sacred scriptures and apostolic tradition^[63] and teachings which have been specifically defined as revealed by an extraordinary definition by a Pope or Ecumenical council (extraordinary universal Magisterium), or those teachings infallibly taught to be revealed by the ordinary universal Magisterium. As in the case of the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption, these doctrines were held by the Church prior to the date of official definition, but open for discussion. The date of definition must be accepted by all faithful members of the Catholic Church as contained specifically in the Deposit of Faith and owed supernatural faith in itself (*de fide credenda*).

There are four Marian dogmas specifically defined by the Magisterium among a large number of other dogmas and doctrines about the Virgin Mary - for example, the Annunciation of Mary is dogma because it is in the scriptures, but it has not been specifically defined by the Magisterium. These four Marian dogmas include:^[1]

Name	First Magisterial Definition	Dogma content
Mother of God	Council of Ephesus (431)	Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh.
Assumption into heaven	Pope Pius XII (1950)	Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory
Immaculate Conception	Pope Pius IX (1854)	Mary, at her conception, was preserved immaculate from Original Sin
Perpetual virginity	Baptismal symbols since 3rd century	'Perpetual virginity of Mary', means that Mary was a virgin before, during and after giving birth

Although there are only four Marian dogmas, popular support for a "fifth Marian dogma" which establishes Mary as Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix appeared in the 20th century both from lay groups and the clergy. According to *L'Osservatore Romano*, in 1996 the Holy See formed a commission to seek the opinion of scholars regarding the possibility and the opportuneness of establishing a fifth Marian dogma on Mary as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate.^[64] A lay movement called *Vox Populi Mariae Mediatrici* is promoting the doctrine of Mary as Mediatrix and provides petitions that can be signed by Roman Catholics at large and sent to the Pope in support of a formal dogmatic definition.^{[65][66]}

Mother of God

This dogma states that *Mary is the mother of God* (de fide).^[67]

The term "Mother of God" appears within the oldest known prayer to Mary, the *Sub tuum praesidium*, which dates to around 250 AD and states: "Under thy protection we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God".^[1] This is reflected in the following statement in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

"From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of 'Mother of God,' to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs."

Early in the fifth century after the Church Fathers had found common ground on Mary's virginity before, during and after giving birth, this was the first specifically Marian doctrine to be formally defined by the Church. The definition *Mother of God* (in Greek: *Theotokos*) was formally affirmed at the Third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431. The objection to the title raised by Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople, was rejected at the council.

Scriptural basis for the dogma is found in John 1:14 which states "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" and Galatians 4:4 which states "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law".^[68] Luke 1:35 further affirms divine maternity by stating: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee ... wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God."

The dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* at the Second Vatican Council affirmed Mary as the Mother of God by stating.^[69]

"The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world, is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer."

This dogma is inherently related to the Christological dogma of the hypostatic union which relates the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ.



Madonna and Child from Saint Catherine's Monastery, c. 600

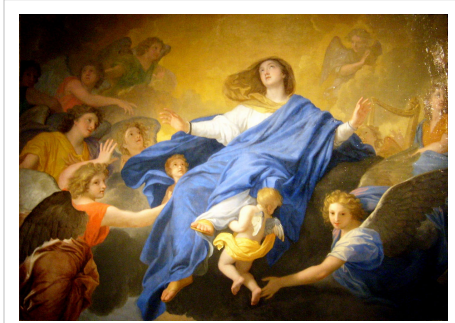
Assumption of Mary

This dogma states that *Mary was assumed into heaven with body and soul* (de fide). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (item 966) states:

"the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things."^[70]

Pope Pius XII discussed the Assumption in *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* (1946) and in declared it a dogma in *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950).^{[71][72]}

Although the Assumption was only recently defined as dogma, accounts of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven have circulated since at least the 5th century and by the 8th century saints Andrew of Crete and John of Damascus had declared belief in it.^{[73][74]} The Book of Revelation (12:1) has been interpreted as referring to it; with her coronation implying her previous bodily assumption to heaven.



Assumption of Mary by Charles Le Brun, 1835

Before declaring the Assumption a dogma in *Munificentissimus Deus* in 1950, in the encyclical *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* "" (1946) Pope Pius XII obtained the opinion of Catholic bishops, and based on their overwhelming support (1210 among the 1232 bishops) proceeded with the dogmatic definition.^[75] Since the 1870 solemn declaration of Papal Infallibility by Vatican I in 1870, this declaration by Pius XII has been the only ex cathedra use of Papal Infallibility. While Pope Pius XII deliberately left open the question of whether Mary died before her Assumption, the more common teaching of the early Fathers is that she did.^{[76][77]}

When responding to Pope Pius XII following the circulation of *Deiparae Virginis Mariae* a large number of Catholic bishops pointed the Book of Genesis (3:15) as a scriptural basis. In *Munificentissimus Deus* (item 39) Pius XII referred to the "struggle against the infernal foe" as in Genesis 3:15 and to "complete victory over the sin and death" as in the Letters of Paul as a scriptural basis for the dogmatic definition, Mary being assumed to heaven as in 1 Corinthians 15:54: "then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory".^{[78][79]}

Immaculate Conception of Mary

This dogma states that *Mary was conceived without original sin* (de fide). This means that the conception of Mary in her mother's womb was without any stain of original sin and from the first moment of her existence, she was preserved by God from the lack of sanctifying grace that afflicts mankind, and that she was instead filled with divine grace.^[80]

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is distinct from and should not be confused with the perpetual virginity of Mary or the virgin birth of Jesus; for this dogma refers to the conception of Mary by her mother, Saint Anne and not the conception of Jesus.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated on December 8, was established in 1476 by Pope Sixtus IV, but the dogmatic definition was performed by Pope Pius IX in his constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*, on December 8, 1854.^[81] The dogmatic definition in *Ineffabilis Deus* (which is Latin for "Ineffable God"), was made *ex cathedra* by the exercise of papal authority by Pope Pius IX.^[82]

The dogma states that Mary possessed sanctifying grace from the first instant of her existence and by a special and unique gift of God was free from the lack of grace caused by the original sin at the beginning of human history.^[83] In *Fulgens Corona* (item 10) Pope Pius XII reaffirmed the concept by stating: "Who will dare to doubt that she, who was purer than the angels and at all times pure, was at any moment, even for the briefest instant, not free from every stain of sin?"^[84]

Ineffabilis Deus (as well as Pope Pius XII's *Munificentissimus Deus* on the Assumption) also teaches the predestination of Mary, in that she was preserved from sin due to the role reserved for her in the economy of salvation. This predetermination of Mary's role in salvation was referred to in *Lumen Gentium* (item 61) which stated that she was "Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God."^[85] The definition in *Ineffabilis Deus* confirms the uniqueness of the Immaculate Conception as a gift from God to Mary to allow her to become the stainless Mother of God.

Perpetual virginity of Mary

This dogma states that *Mary was a virgin before, during and after giving birth* (de fide). This oldest Marian doctrine, (also held by Lutheran, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox, and many other Christians) affirms Mary's "real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made Man."^[86] Thus, by the teaching of this dogma, the faithful believe that Mary was ever-Virgin (Greek *ἀειπαρθενος*) for the whole of her life, making Jesus her only biological son, whose conception and birth are held to be miraculous.^{[87][88]}

The doctrine of perpetual virginity is distinct from the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which relates to the conception of the Virgin Mary herself without any stain (*macula* in Latin) of original sin.^[89]

Virginity before birth



Altar of the Immaculata by Joseph Lusenberg, 1876. Saint Antony's Church, Urtijëi, Italy.



The Annunciation by Paolo de Matteis, 1712.

This means that *Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit* without participation of any man (de fide). The Greek term *Aeiparthenos* (i.e. "Ever Virgin") is attested to from the early 4th century.^[90] The Catechism of the Catholic Church (item 499) includes the term *Aeiparthenos* and referring to the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* (item 57) states: "Christ's birth did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it."^{[91][92][93]}

Virginitly during birth

This means that *Mary gave birth without losing her corporal virginitly* (de fide) and her corporal integrity was not affected by giving birth. The Church does not teach how this occurred physically, but insists that virginitly during child birth is different from virginitly of conception; Pope Pius XII stating in *Mystici Corporis* "Within her virginal womb Christ our Lord already bore the exalted title of Head of the Church; in a marvelous birth she brought Him forth as the source of all supernatural life".^[94]

Virginitly after birth

This means that *Mary remained a virgin after giving birth* (de fide). This belief of the Church was questioned in its early years^[95] given scriptures say little about this, mentioning the brothers of Jesus, but never "sons of Mary," suggesting to the patristical writers a broader family relationship.^[96]

Other Marian doctrines

Apart from the four Marian dogmas listed above, the Catholic Church holds a number of other doctrines about the Virgin Mary which have been developed by references to Sacred Scripture, theological reasoning and Church tradition.[□]

Mary as Mother of all Christians

The title *Mother of the Church* (in Latin *Mater Ecclesiae*) was officially given to the Virgin Mary during the Second Vatican Council by Pope Paul VI.^[97] This title goes back to St. Ambrose of Milan in the 4th century, but this use was not known until its 1944 rediscovery by Hugo Rahner. Rahner's Mariology, following Ambrose, saw Mary in her role within the Church, his interpretation being based solely on Ambrose and the early Fathers.[□]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the Virgin Mary is mother of the Church and of all its members, namely all Christians:[□]

"The Virgin Mary . . . is acknowledged and honoured as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head." "Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church."

Pope Paul VI's "Credo of the People of God" states:

"The Mother of the Church, carries on in heaven her maternal role with regard to the members of Christ, cooperating in the birth and development of divine life in the souls of the redeemed."

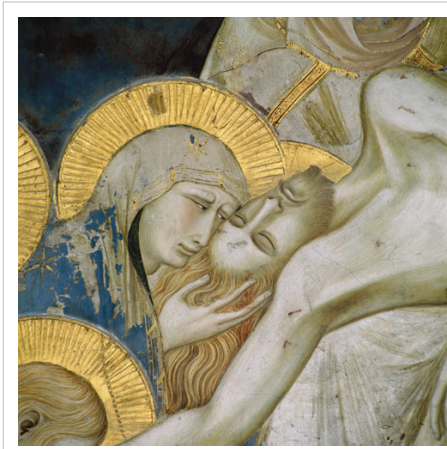
In *Redemptoris Mater* Pope John Pail II referred to Paul VI's "Credo of the People of God" as a reaffirmation of the statement that Mary is the "mother of the entire Christian people, both faithful and pastors" and wrote that the Credo "restated this truth in an even more forceful way":[□]



Federico Barocci, *Madonna del Popolo*
(Madonna of the people) 1579

Pope Benedict XVI also referred to the *Credo* of Paul VI and stated that it sums up all of the scriptural texts that relate to the matter.^[1]

Co-Redemptrix



Pietro Lorenzetti, 1310

Co-Redemptrix refers to the participation of Mary in the salvation process. Already, Irenaeus, the Church Father (died 200), referred to Mary as "causa salutis" [cause of our salvation] given her "fiat."^[98] It is teaching, which has been considered since the 15th century^[99] but never declared a dogma. The Roman Catholic view of Co-Redemptrix does not imply that Mary participates as equal part in the redemption of the human race, since Christ is the only redeemer.^[100] Mary herself needed redemption and was redeemed by Jesus Christ her son. Being redeemed by Christ, implies that she cannot be his equal part in the redemption process.^[101]

Co-redemptrix refers to an indirect or unequal but important participation by Mary in the redemption process. She gave free consent to give life to the redeemer, to share his life, to suffer with him under the cross and to sacrifice him for the sake of the redemption of mankind. Co-redemption is not something new.

Papal teaching began to mention this aspect in official Church documents during the pontificate of Pope Pius X^[102] Pius X referred to it in his encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*.^[103] Pope Benedict XV first described the term in his own right in his Apostolic Letter, *Inter Soldalica*, issued March 22, 1918.^[104] Pope Pius XII repeated this argument with slightly different accents in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis*.^[105] In the Papal bull *Munificentissimus Deus* on dogma of the assumption, Pope Pius declares that "*the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, as the noble associate of the divine Redeemer*"^[106]

Mediatrix

In Catholic teachings, Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man.^[107] He alone reconciled through his death on the Cross creator and creation. But this does not exclude a secondary mediating role for Mary, preparatory, supportive, in the view of several prominent, but not all Catholics. The teaching that Mary intercedes for all believers and especially those who request her intercession through prayer has been held in the Church since early times, for example by Ephraim, the Syrian "after the mediator a mediatrix for the whole world"^[108] Intercession is something that may be done by all the heavenly saints, but Mary is seen as having the greatest intercessionary power. The earliest surviving recorded prayer to Mary is the *Sub tuum praesidium*, written in Greek.^[109]

Mary has increasingly been seen as a principal dispenser of God's graces and Advocate for the people of God and is mentioned as such in several official Church documents. Pope Pius IX used the title in *Ineffabilis Deus*. In the first of his so called *Rosary encyclicals*, *Supremi Apostolatus* (1883), Pope Leo XIII calls Our Lady *the guardian of our peace and the dispensatrix of heavenly graces*. The following year, 1884, his encyclical *Superiore Anno* speaks of the prayers presented to God *through her whom He has chosen to be the dispenser of all heavenly graces*. Pope Pius X employed this title in *Ad Diem Illud* in 1904, Pope Benedict XV introduced it into the Marian liturgy when he created the Marian feast of Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces in 1921, In his 1954 encyclical *Ad caeli reginam*, Pope Pius XII calls Mary the Mediatrix of peace.^[110]

Queen of Heaven

The doctrine that the Virgin Mary has been crowned Queen of Heaven goes back to the early patristic writers of the Church such as St. Gregory Nazianzen "the Mother of the King of the universe," and the "Virgin Mother who brought forth the King of the whole world,"^[111] Prudentius, the Mother marvels "that she has brought forth God as man, and even as Supreme King."^[112] and, St. Ephrem, "Let Heaven sustain me in its embrace, because I am honored above it. For heaven was not Thy mother, but Thou hast made it Thy throne. How much more honorable and venerable than the throne of a king is her mother."^[113] The Catholic Church often sees Mary as queen in heaven, bearing a crown of twelve stars in Revelation^[114]



Statue (detail) of the Assumption of Mary in Attard, Malta

Many Popes have given tribute to it. Mary is the Queen of Heaven and Earth, (Pius IX), Queen and Ruler of the Universe (Leo XIII) and Queen of the World (Pius XII)^[115] The theological and logical foundation of these titles rests in the dogma of Mary as the Mother of God. As mother of God, she participates in his salvation plan. The Catholic faith teaches that Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, reigns with a mother's solicitude over the entire world, just as she is crowned in heavenly blessedness with the glory of a Queen:^[116]

Certainly, in the full and strict meaning of the term, only Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is King; but Mary, too, as Mother of the divine Christ, as His associate in the redemption, in his struggle with His enemies and His final victory over them, has a share, though in a limited and analogous way, in His royal dignity. For from her union with Christ she attains a radiant eminence transcending that of any other creature; from her union with Christ she receives the royal right to dispose of the treasures of the Divine Redeemer's Kingdom; from her union with Christ finally is derived the inexhaustible efficacy of her maternal intercession before the Son and His Father.

Marian devotions and traditions



Praying to *Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn* in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Marian devotions are highly prominent within the Roman Catholic tradition and a wide variety of devotions ranging from Consecration to Mary, to the wearing of scapular, to multi-day prayers such as Rosary Novenas are practiced by Catholics.^{[117][118][119][120]}

The spread of Marian devotions, such as the Rosary via lay organizations, has also influenced popular interest in Mariology, the growth of Marian devotions building *sensus fidelium*, which influences the public interest in specific aspects of Mariology.^[121] Marian devotions generally begin at the level of popular piety, often in connection with the religious experiences and visions of simple and modest individuals (in some cases children), and the recounting of their experiences in time creates

strong emotions among numerous Roman Catholics to build *sensus fidelium*.^{[122][123]}

Theologians have at times cited in support of their Mariology this constant *sensus fidelium*, e.g. Saint Alphonsus Liguori valued texts and traditions of the Church Fathers as expressions of the *sensus fidelium* of the past and attributed great weight to the argument that "the greater part of the faithful have always had recourse to the intercession of the divine mother for all the graces which they desire".^[124] Speaking of the witness of the Church

Fathers in attributing certain titles to Mary, in *Fulgens Corona* Pope Pius XII wrote:

If the popular praises of the Blessed Virgin Mary be given the careful consideration they deserve, who will dare to doubt that she, who was purer than the angels and at all times pure, was at any moment, even for the briefest instant, not free from every stain of sin?^[125]

The Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary were defined in part on the basis of the *sensus fidei*, "the supernatural appreciation of faith on the part of the whole people, when, from the bishops to the last of the faithful, they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals".^[126] In the case of the dogmas of Immaculate Conception and Assumption, the two popes concerned consulted the Catholic bishops worldwide about the faith of the community before proceeding to define the dogma.^[127]

Referring to these dogmas, in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI called the People of God the "teacher that goes first" and stated:

"Faith both in the Immaculate Conception and in the bodily Assumption of the Virgin was already present in the People of God, while theology had not yet found the key to interpreting it in the totality of the doctrine of the faith. The People of God therefore precede theologians and this is all thanks to that supernatural *sensus fidei*, namely, that capacity infused by the Holy Spirit that qualifies us to embrace the reality of the faith with humility of heart and mind. In this sense, the People of God is the 'teacher that goes first' and must then be more deeply examined and intellectually accepted by theology."^[128]

Marian devotions have been encouraged by popes, and in *Marialis Cultus* Pope Paul VI stated: "From the moment when we were called to the See of Peter, we have constantly striven to enhance devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary."^[129] In *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope John Paul II stated: "Among all devotions that which most consecrates and conforms a soul to our Lord is devotion to Mary."^[130]

Devotion to the Virgin Mary does not, however, amount to worship - which is reserved for God; Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures. In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed a three-level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* that applies to God, the Virgin Mary and then to the other saints.^{[131][132][133]}

Differing perspectives

Throughout the centuries, Catholics have viewed the Virgin Mary from a number of perspectives, at times derived from specific Marian attributes ranging from queenship to humility and at other times based on cultural preferences of events taking place at specific points in history.^{[134][135]} In parallel with the traditional approaches to Mariology, opposing views based on progressive interpretations of have been presented by feminists, psychologists and liberal Catholics.

Traditional views

Traditional views on Mary have emphasized the Marian dogmas and doctrines, accompanied by devotions and veneration. Yet these views have changed and been transformed over time.



A statue of John Paul II with Our Lady of Guadalupe, by Pacho Cárdenas, made entirely with keys donated by Mexicans to symbolize that they had given him the keys to their hearts.^[136]

An example of the changing perspectives on the Virgin Mary based on specific spiritual views, and its adoption within a culture a world away is the transformation of the image of Mary from a Heavenly Queen to a mother of humility, and the construction of views to accommodate both perspectives. While depictions of the Virgin Mary as the Queen of Heaven or Coronation of the Virgin by artists such as Paolo Veneziano or Giuliano da Rimini were common in the early part of the 14th century, they did not fit with the virtue of humility which was a key tenet of the spirituality of Saint Francis of Assisi. The concept of the Virgin of humility was developed in the 14th century in order to accommodate Franciscan piety, by depicting the Madonna sitting on the ground, rather than a throne. It offered a view of the Virgin Mary (often barefoot) as a mother nursing a child, rather than a Queen in a coronation scene.^{[137][138][139]}

As the Franciscans began to preach in China, the notion of the *Virgin of humility* resonated well with the Chinese, partly due to the cultural acceptance of humility as a virtue in China, and partly due to its similarity to the motherly, merciful figure of Kuanyin, which was much admired in south China.^{[140][141][142]} However, by the middle of

the 15th century, a dual view had emerged in Europe, as represented by Domenico di Bartolo's 1433 Madonna of humility which expressed the symbolic duality of her nature: an earthly barefoot woman, as well as a heavenly queen. Despite her low, sitting position, the depiction of star and the gems, as well as a halo, signify the regal status of the Virgin, as she is being attended to while she holds the Child Jesus.^[143]

Saint Juan Diego's account of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe to him in 1531 on Tepeyac Hill in Mexico provides another example of the cultural adaptation of the view of the Virgin Mary. Juan Diego did not describe the Virgin Mary as either European or Middle Eastern, but as a tanned Aztec princess who spoke in his local Nahuatl language, and not in Spanish. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe that is highly venerated in Mexico has the appearance of a South American, rather than a European woman, and the clothing of the Virgin of Guadalupe has been identified as that of an Aztec princess. The Virgin of Guadalupe was a turning point in the conversion of Latin America to Catholicism, and is the primary view of Mary among millions of Catholics in Mexico in the 21st century.^{[144][145][146]} Pope John Paul II reinforced the localization of this view by permitting local Aztec dances during the ceremony in which he declared Juan Diego a saint, spoke in Nahuatl as part of the ceremony, called Juan Diego "the talking eagle" and asked him to show "the way that leads to the *Dark Virgin* of Tepeyac".^[147]

The view of the Virgin Mary as a "miracle worker" has existed for centuries and is still held by many Catholics in the 21st century.^{[148][149]} The legends of the miracles of the *Maddona of Orsanmichele* in Florence go back to the Renaissance.^[150] The legends of miracles performed by the image of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa also go back for centuries, and it continues to be venerated today as the Patron of Poland.^{[151][152]} Every year, millions of Catholic pilgrims visit the Basilica at Our Lady of Lourdes in search of miraculous cures.^{[153][154]} Although millions of Catholics hope for miracles on their pilgrimages, the Vatican has generally been reluctant to approve of modern miracles, unless they have been subject to extensive analysis.

Liberal perspectives

Since the end of the 19th century, a number of progressive and liberal perspectives of Mariology have been presented, ranging from feminist criticisms to interpretations based on modern psychology and liberal Catholic viewpoints. These views are generally critical of the Roman Catholic approach to Mariology as well as the Eastern Orthodox church, which has even more Marian emphasis within its official liturgy.^{[[155]}


Some feminists contend that, as with other women saints such as Joan of Arc, the image of Mary is a construct of the patriarchal mind. They argue that Marian dogmas and doctrines and the typical forms of Marian devotion reinforce patriarchy by offering women temporary comfort from the ongoing oppression inflicted on them by male dominated churches and societies.^{[[1]} In the feminist view, old gender stereotypes persist within traditional Marian teachings and theological doctrines. To that end books on "feminist Mariology" have been published to present opposing interpretations and perspectives.^{[[1]}

The psychological analysis of Marian teachings dates back to Sigmund Freud, who used the title of a poem by Goethe in his 1911 paper *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.^{[[1]} Carl Jung, on the other hand, viewed the Virgin Mary as a spiritual version of the more loving Goddess Eros.^{[[156]} A large number of other psychological interpretations have been presented through the years, ranging from the study of the similarities of the Virgin Mary and the Buddhist Goddess Tara, or the humble and loving figure presented by the East Asian Goddess Kwan Yin.

Since the Reformation many Christians have opposed Marian venerations, and that trend has continued into the 21st century among progressive and liberal Christians, who see the high level of attention paid to the Virgin Mary both as being without sufficient grounding in Scripture and as distracting from the worship due to Christ.^{[[157]}

Groups of liberal Catholics view the traditional image of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Catholic Church as an obstacle towards realization of the goal of womanhood, and as a symbol of the "systemic patriarchal oppression" of women within the Church. Moreover, some liberal Catholics view the cultivation of the traditional image of Mary as a method of manipulation of Catholics at large by the Church hierarchy.^{[[158]} Other liberal Christians argue that the modern concepts of equal opportunity for men and women does not resonate well with the humble image of Mary, obediently and subserviently kneeling before Christ.^{[[159]}

Eastern Catholic differences

<p>Roman Catholic Mariology A series of articles on</p>
<p>Marian Prayers</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alma Redemptoris Mater • Angelus • As a Child I Loved You • Ave Maris Stella • Ave Regina Caelorum • Fatima Prayers • Flos Carmeli • Hail Mary • Hail Mary of Gold • Immaculata prayer

• Immaculate Mary	
• Magnificat	
• Mary, Mother of Grace	
• Mary Our Queen	
• Memorare	
• Regina Coeli	
• Rosary	
• Salve Regina	
• Stabat Mater	
• Sub tuum praesidium	
• Three Hail Marys	
•	v
•	t
•	e [160]

While Eastern Catholics respect papal authority, and largely hold the same theological beliefs as Roman Catholics, Eastern theology differs on specific Marian beliefs. Furthermore, much of the literature and publications on Mariology and centers for its study have been related to the Church of Rome.

Assumption of Mary

The traditional Eastern expression of this doctrine is the Dormition of the Theotokos which emphasises her falling asleep to be later assumed into heaven. The differences in these observances is for some Eastern Catholics superficial.^[161] However, Latin Catholics in general object to this doctrine.^[162]

Immaculate Conception

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is a teaching of Eastern origin but expressed in the terminology of the Western Church.^[163] The Western concept of the Virgin Mary being free from original sin as defined by St. Augustine of Hippo is not accepted in the East. However, Eastern Catholics recognized from ancient times that Mary was preserved by God from sin. Eastern Catholics while not observing the Western feast, have no difficulty affirming it or even dedicating their churches to the Virgin Mary under this title.^[164]

Centers for Mariological studies

The formal study of Mariology within the circles associated with the Holy See took a major step forward between the Holy Year 1950 and 1958 based on the actions of Pope Pius XII, who authorized institutions for increased academic research into the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

- Pontifical Marian International Academy^[165] The PAMI is an international pontifical organization connecting all Promoters of Mariology, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Muslim. John XXIII with the Apostolic Letter *Maiores in Dies* defined the purpose of the PAMI: to promote and animate studies of Mariology through International Mariological Marian Congresses and other academic meetings and to see to the publication of their studies. The PAMI has the task of coordinating the other Marian Academies and Societies that exist all over the world and to exercise vigilance against any Marian excess or minimalism. For this reason the Pope determined that in the Academy there be a Council that assures the organization of Congresses and the coordination of the Mariological Societies, Promoters and Teachers of Mariology.
- *Academia Mariana Salesiana* - He granted the foundation of the Academia Mariana Salesiana, which is a part of a papal university. The Academy supports Salesian studies to further the veneration of the Blessed Virgin in the tradition of Saint John Bosco.^[166]

- *Centro Mariano Montfortano*- Also in 1950, the Centro Mariano Montfortano was moved from Bergamo to Rome. The Centro promulgates the teachings of Saint Louis de Montfort, who was earlier canonized by Pius XII. It publishes the monthly *Madre e Regina*, which promulgates the Marian orientation of Montfort.^[167]
- Marianum^[168] was created in 1950 and entrusted to the Order of Servites. It is authorized to grant all academic degrees, including a doctorate in theology. Since 1976, every two years the Marianum organizes international conferences to find modern formulations which approximate the mystery of Mary.
- *Collegamento Mariano Nazionale* (1958)- the last Marian initiative of Pope Pius XII. It coordinates activities of Marian centres in Italy, and organizes Marian pilgrimages and Marian study weeks for priests. In addition it started Marian youth gatherings and publishes the journal *Madonna*.

Of these organizations, the *Marianum* Pontifical Theological Faculty is the most active marilological centre in Rome (www.marianum.it).^[169] This Pontifical Catholic Faculty was founded by Father Gabriel Roschini (who directed it for several years) under the direction of Pope Pius XII in 1950. At the Marianum, one can get a Master's degree in Mariology (2-year academic program) and one can also get a doctorate in Mariology. This mariological facility has a library with more than 85,000 volumes on Mariology and a number of magazines and journals of theological and Mariological concern. *Marianum* is also the name of the prestigious journal of Marian theology, founded by Father Roschini in 1939.

In 1975, the University of Dayton in Ohio formed the International Marian Research Institute in affiliation with the Marianum to offer a doctorate in sacred theology (S.T.D.) and a licentiate in sacred theology (S.T.L.).^[170]

Further reading

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Notes

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