



Mary in the New Testament

Church Dogmas about Mary
in the Modern Period

Mary becomes the one close to us who mercifully grants “free access” to God through prayer to her.

For Protestantism, she takes over a large part of the meaning of Christ.

Two Sources of Revelation in Catholicism:

Holy Scripture and Tradition (decided by the pope together with the bishops and the councils of the Church). Dogmas state the content of Revelation and are to be believed by all Catholic Christians.

Four Dogmas about Mary:

**Mother of God (4th Century), Virgin Birth (6th Century),
Immaculate Conception (1854), Assumption into Heaven
(1950).**

First evidence of belief in the Immaculate Conception in the 5th century, but belief in her holiness and purity in the 2nd century; first evidence of belief in the assumption in the 5th century. Both have been doctrines of the Church since the Middle Ages, although the Immaculate Conception was contested by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th Century.

Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854, Pope Pious IX):
“the Most Blessed Virgin Mary from the first moment of her conception was, by the singular grace and privilege of the Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus..., was preserved immune from all stain of original sin, is revealed by God...”

Dogma of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven

(1950, Pope Pious XII):

“that the immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.”

Pope Pius XII, 1946:

The Son of God reflects on His heavenly Mother the glory, the majesty and the dominion of His kingship ... as Mother and cooperator [Mediatix], she remains forever associated to Him, with a practically unlimited power, in the distribution of the graces which flow from the Redemption.

Vatican II, Lumen Gentium (1964), devotion to Mary

...the maternal duty of Mary toward men in no wise obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power. For all the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin ... flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. In no way does it impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ.

By her constant intercession she continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. ... Hence the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate...and Mediatrix. But this honor given to Mary must be so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator.

The council admonishes all children of the Church to advance strongly and highly esteem the practices of devotion to the blessed virgin that over the centuries have been recommended by the popes and bishops...

The theologians and the preachers of the Word of God are however emphatically admonished carefully to refrain both from every false exaggeration and from too great a spiritual narrowness in regard to the unique dignity of the Mother of God. [They are to] rightly illuminate the work and privileges of the Holy Virgin, which always refer to Christ, the origin of all truth, holiness and piety.

Apparitions (Source: University of Dayton)

In the 20th Century there were 386 officially recorded apparitions. After examination, “about 299” were given the status “no decision.” “About 79” were designated “negative,” i.e. refused.

Eleven were approved by a Bishop “for prayer and devotion at the site.”

Eight were approved by the “sacred congregation” of cardinals and the pope as apparitions of Mary.

Criteria for Bishop's Approval, Then Referral to the Pope for Further Examination

1. The facts in the case are free of error.

2. The person(s) receiving the messages is/are psychologically balanced, honest, moral, sincere, and respectful of church authority.

3. Doctrinal errors are not attributed to God, Mary or to a saint.

4. Theological and spiritual doctrines presented are free of error.

5. Moneymaking is not a motive involved in the events.

6. Healthy religious devotion and spiritual fruits result, with no evidence of collective hysteria. (healings, conversions)

“Apparitions are a widespread Marian phenomenon. Wholeheartedly hailed and embraced by some, apparitions are out-rightly rejected by others. Emotions and irrational behavior play an important role in both instances. A cautious and balanced approach would seem necessary and appropriate.”

Critique:

In an apparition Mary usually appears in a familiar form, i.e. like a statue of her in a church or in a painting. Other kinds of visions occur and are often not religious, and non-Catholic healings have occurred under other highly emotional experiences of faith or belief. (Catherine Kuhlman). Unusual phenomena of light may be interpreted as an apparition. Where longer discourses are attributed to the apparition, the suspicion of subjective invention is much greater.

When the apparition of Mary speaks, the message is usually one of simple piety: pray the rosary, build a church, sometimes make reparation for the sinful state of the world by prayer.

The most famous: Lourdes (1858); Fatima (1917); Zeitoun, Egypt (1968-70)

**Fatima: three revelations: vision of hell; prediction of another world war; “a man in white will be attacked and fall down.”
The last two recorded much later than the event.**

