

Mary (Mother of Jesus)

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"Virgin Mary" redirects here. For other uses, see [Virgin Mary \(disambiguation\)](#).

"Saint Mary" redirects here. For other uses, see [Saint Mary \(disambiguation\)](#).

This article is an overview. For specific views, see: [Anglican](#), [Eastern Orthodox](#), [Ecumenical](#), [Islamic](#), [Lutheran](#), [Protestant](#), and [Roman Catholic](#) perspectives.

Mary	
<i>The Madonna in Sorrow</i> , by Sassoferrato , 17th century	
Born	Unknown; celebrated 8 September ^[1]
Residence	Nazareth , Galilee
Nationality	Israelite , Roman Empire ^[2]
Ethnicity	Israelite
Spouse	Joseph ^[3]
Children	Jesus of Nazareth
Parents	(According to the Gospel of James , circa 2nd Century AD): Joachim and Anne ^[4]

Mary (**Hebrew**: מַרְיָם, *Miriam*; **Aramaic**: *Maryām*; **Arabic**: مريم, *Maryam*), variously called **Saint Mary**, **Mother Mary**, the **Virgin Mary**, the ***Theotokos***, the **Blessed Virgin Mary**, **Mary**, **Mother of God**, and, in **Islam**, as ***Maryam***, **mother of 'Isa**, was an [Israelite](#)^[5] woman of [Nazareth](#) in [Galilee](#) who lived in the late 1st century BC and early 1st century AD, and is considered by Christians to be the first **proselyte** to **Christianity**. She is identified in the **New Testament**^{[Mt 1:16,18-25][Lk 1:26-56][2:1-7]} and in the **Qur'an** as the mother of **Jesusthrough divine intervention**. Jesus is viewed as the **messiah**—the ***Christ***—in both traditions, giving rise to the common name of [Jesus Christ](#).

The [canonical gospels](#) of [Matthew](#) and [Luke](#) describe Mary as a virgin (Greek *παρθένος*, *parthénos*).^[6] Traditionally, [Christians](#) believe that she conceived her son miraculously by the agency of the [Holy Spirit](#). [Muslims](#) believe that she conceived by the command of God. This took place when she was already [betrothed](#) to [Saint Joseph](#) and was awaiting the concluding rite of marriage, the formal home-taking ceremony.^[7] She married Joseph and accompanied him to [Bethlehem](#), where Jesus was born.^[3] In keeping with Jewish custom, the betrothal would have taken place when she was around 12, and the birth of Jesus about a year later.^[8]

The New Testament begins its account of Mary's life with the Annunciation, when the angel [Gabriel](#) appeared to her and announced her divine selection to be the mother of Jesus. Church tradition and early non-biblical writings state that her parents were an elderly couple, [Saint Joachim](#) and [Saint Anne](#). The Bible records Mary's role in key events of the life of Jesus from his conception to his Ascension. [Apocryphal](#) writings tell of her subsequent death and bodily [assumption](#) into heaven.

Christians of the [Catholic Church](#), the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#), [Oriental Orthodox Church](#), [Anglican Communion](#), and [Lutheran](#) churches believe that Mary, as mother of Jesus, is the *Mother of God* (Μήτηρ Θεοῦ) and the [Theotokos](#), literally *Bearer of God*. Mary has been venerated since [Early Christianity](#).^{[9][10]} Throughout the ages she has been a favorite subject in Christian art, music, and literature.

There is significant diversity in the [Marian beliefs](#) and devotional practices of major Christian traditions. The Catholic Church has a number of [Marian dogmas](#), such as the [Immaculate Conception of Mary](#) and the [Assumption of Mary](#). Catholics refer to her as [Our Lady](#) and [venerate](#) her as the [Queen of Heaven](#) and [Mother of the Church](#); most [Protestants](#) do not share these beliefs.^{[11][12]} Many Protestants see a minimal role for Mary within Christianity, based on the brevity of biblical references.^[13]

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The [Annunciation](#) by [Eustache Le Sueur](#), an example of 17th century [Marian art](#). The [Angel Gabriel](#) announces to Mary her pregnancy with [Jesus](#) and offers her [White Lillies](#)

The New Testament account of her humility and obedience to the message of God has made her an exemplar for all ages of Christians. Out of the details supplied in the New Testament by

the Gospels about the maid of Galilee, Christian piety and theology have constructed a picture of Mary that fulfills the prediction ascribed to her in the **Magnificat** ([Luke 1:48](#)): "Henceforth all generations will call me blessed."

— "Mary." Web: 29Sep2010 *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*.

The English name "Mary" comes from the **Greek** *Μαρία*, which is a shortened form of *Μαριάμ*. The New Testament name was based on her original **Hebrew** name מִרְיָם or **Miryam**. Both *Μαρία* and *Μαριάμ* appear in the New Testament.^[14]

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is referred to by name fewer than twenty times in the New Testament

- these in the infancy narrative ([1:27,30,34,38,39,41,46,56](#); [2:5,16,19,34](#)).
- Matthew's gospel mentions her by name five times, four of these ([1:16,18,20](#); [2:11](#)) in the infancy narrative and only once ([13:55](#)) outside the infancy narrative.
- Mark's gospel names her only once ([6:3](#)) and mentions her as Jesus' mother without naming her in [3:31](#).
- John's gospel refers to her twice but never mentions her by name. Described as Jesus' mother, she makes two appearances in John's gospel. She is first seen at the wedding at Cana of Galilee^{[[Jn 2:1-12](#)]} which is mentioned only in the fourth gospel. The second reference in John, also exclusively listed this gospel, has the mother of Jesus standing near the cross of her son together with the (also unnamed) "disciple whom Jesus loved."^{[[Jn 19:25-26](#)]} [John 2:1-12](#) is the only text in the canonical gospels in which Mary speaks to (and about) the adult Jesus.
- In the Book of Acts, Luke's second writing, Mary and the "[brothers of Jesus](#)" are mentioned in the company of the eleven who are gathered in the upper room after the ascension.^{[[Acts 1:14](#)]}
- In the Book of Revelation,^{[[12:1,5-6](#)]} John's apocalypse never explicitly identifies the "woman clothed with the sun" as Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus. However, some

Family and Early Life

The New Testament tells little of Mary's early history. The 2nd century [Protoevangelium of James](#) is the first source to name her parents as [Joachim](#) and [Anne](#).^[16]

According to Luke, Mary was a cousin of [Elizabeth](#), wife of the priest [Zechariah](#) of the priestly division of [Abijah](#), who was herself part of the [lineage of Aaron](#) and so of the tribe of Levi.^{[[Luke 1:5:1:36](#)]} Some of those who consider that the relationship with Elizabeth was on the maternal side, consider that Mary, like Joseph, to whom she was betrothed, was of the House of David and so of the tribe of Judah, and that the [genealogy of Jesus](#) presented in [Luke 3](#) from [Nathan, third son of David and Bathsheba](#), is in fact the genealogy of Mary, while the genealogy from [Solomon](#) given in [Matthew 1](#) is that of Joseph.^{[17][18]} (Aaron's wife [Elisheba](#) was of the tribe of Judah, so all his descendants are from both Levi and Judah.)^{[[Num.1:7 & Ex.6:23](#)]}



The Virgin's first seven steps mosaic from [Chora Church](#), c. 12th century.

Mary resided in "her own house"^[Lk.1:56] in [Nazareth](#) in [Galilee](#), possibly with her parents, and during her betrothal – the first stage of a [Jewish marriage](#) – the [angel](#) Gabriel announced to her that she was to be the mother of the promised [Messiah](#) by conceiving him through the Holy Spirit.^[19] After a number of months, when Joseph was told of her conception in a dream by "an angel of the Lord", he was surprised; but the angel told him to be unafraid and take her as his wife, which Joseph did, thereby formally completing the wedding rites.^{[20][Mt 1:18-25]}

Since the angel Gabriel had told Mary (according to [Luke 1:19](#)) that Elizabeth, having previously been barren, was then miraculously pregnant, Mary hurried to see Elizabeth, who was living with her husband Zechariah in "Hebron, in the hill *country* of Judah".^[21] Mary arrived at the house and greeted Elizabeth who called Mary "the mother of my Lord", and Mary spoke the words of praise that later became known as the [Magnificat](#) from her first word in the [Latin](#) version.^[Luke 1:46-55] After about three months, Mary returned to her own house.^[Lk 1:56-57]

According to the Gospel of Luke, a decree of the Roman emperor [Augustus](#) required that Joseph return to his hometown of [Bethlehem](#) to be [taxed](#). While he was there with Mary, she gave birth to Jesus; but because there was no place for them in the inn, she used a [manger](#) as a cradle.^{[22]:p.14[2:1ff]} After eight days, he was [circumcised](#) according to Jewish law, and named "JESUS"^[Luke 2:21] in accordance with the instructions that the angel had given to Mary in [Luke 1:31](#), and Joseph was likewise told to call him Jesus in [Matthew 1:21](#).

After Mary continued in the "blood of her purifying" another thirty three days for a total of forty days, she brought her burnt offering and sin offering to the temple, so the priest could make atonement for her sins, being cleansed from her blood.^[Leviticus 12:1-8] They also presented Jesus – "As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord" ([Luke 2:23](#)other verses). After the prophecies of [Simeon](#) and the prophetess [Anna](#) in [Luke 2:25-38](#) concluded, Joseph and Mary took Jesus and "returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."^[Luke 2:39]

Sometime later, the "[wise men](#)" showed up at the "house" where Jesus and his family were staying, and they fled by night and stayed in Egypt for awhile, and returned after Herod died in 4 BC and took up residence in Nazareth. [\[Mat.2\]](#)

Mary in the Life of Jesus



Stabat Mater in the [Valle Romita Polyptych](#) by [Gentile da Fabriano](#), c. 1410-1412

Mary is involved in the only event in Jesus' adolescent life that is recorded in the New Testament. At the age of twelve Jesus, having become separated from his parents on their return journey from the [Passover](#) celebration in [Jerusalem](#), was found among the teachers in the temple. [\[23\]:p.210\[Lk 2:41-52\]](#)

After Jesus' [baptism](#) by [John the Baptist](#) and his temptations by the devil in the desert, Mary was present when, at her suggestion, Jesus worked his first [Cana](#) miracle during a marriage they attended, by [turning water into wine](#). [\[Jn 2:1-11\]](#) Subsequently there are events when Mary is present along with [James](#), Joseph, Simon, and [Judas](#), called Jesus' brothers, and unnamed "sisters". [\[Mt 1:24-25\]\[12:46\]\[13:54-56\]\[27:56\]\[Mk 3:31\]\[6:3\]\[15:40\]\[16:1\]\[Jn 2:12\]\[7:3-5\]\[Gal 1:19\]\[Ac 1:14\]](#) In later centuries when the doctrine of the [Perpetual virginity of Mary](#) developed, the early Church reinterpreted the words commonly translated "brother" and "sister" as actually meaning close relatives.

There is also an incident in which Jesus is sometimes interpreted as rejecting his family. "And his mother and his brothers arrived, and standing outside, they sent in a message asking for him [\[Mk 3:21\]](#) ... And looking at those who sat in a circle around him, Jesus said, "These are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother." [\[24\]\[3:31-35\]](#)

Mary is also depicted as being present among the [women at the crucifixion](#) during the [crucifixion](#) standing near "the disciple whom Jesus loved" along with Mary of Clopas and [Mary Magdalene](#), [\[Jn 19:25-26\]](#) to which list [Matthew 27:56](#) adds "the mother of the sons of Zebedee",

presumably the [Salome](#) mentioned in [Mark 15:40](#). This representation is called a *Stabat Mater*.^{[25][26]} Mary, cradling the dead body of her Son, while not recorded in the Gospel accounts, is a common motif in art, called a "[pietà](#)" or "pity".

After the Ascension of Jesus

In [Acts 1:26, especially v. 14](#), Mary is the only one to be mentioned by name other than the [eleven apostles](#), who abode in the [upper room](#), when they returned from mount Olivet. (It is not stated where the later gathering of about one hundred and twenty disciples was located, when they elected [Matthias](#) to fill the office of [Judas Iscariot](#) who perished.) Some speculate that the "elect lady" mentioned in [2 John 1:1](#) may be Mary. From this time, she disappears from the biblical accounts, although it is held by Catholics that she is again portrayed as the heavenly woman of [Revelation](#).^[Rev 12:1]

Her death is not recorded in scripture. However, Catholic and Orthodox tradition and doctrine have her [assumed](#) (taken bodily) into [Heaven](#). Belief in the corporeal assumption of Mary is universal to [Catholicism](#), in both [Eastern](#) and [Western Catholic Churches](#), as well as the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#),^{[27][28]} [Coptic Churches](#), and parts of the [Anglican Communion](#) and [Continuing Anglican Churches](#).^[29]

Later Christian Writings and Traditions

According to the [apocryphal Gospel of James](#) Mary was the daughter of [Saint Joachim](#) and [Saint Anne](#). Before Mary's conception Anna had been barren. Mary was given to service as a consecrated virgin in the Temple in Jerusalem when she was three years old, much like [Hannah](#) took [Samuel](#) to the [Tabernacle](#) as recorded in the [Old Testament](#).^[4] Some [apocryphal](#) accounts state that at the time of her betrothal to Joseph Mary was 12–14 years old, and he was ninety years old, but such accounts are unreliable.^[30]

According to [Sacred Tradition](#), Mary died surrounded by the [apostles](#) (in either [Jerusalem](#) or [Ephesus](#)) between three days and 24 years after Christ's [ascension](#). When the apostles later opened her tomb, they found it to be empty and they concluded that she had been [assumed](#) into [Heaven](#).^{[28][31]} [Mary's Tomb](#), an empty tomb in Jerusalem, is attributed to Mary.^[32] The Roman Catholic Church teaches [Mary's assumption](#), but does not teach that she necessarily died.

Inside a purported and unverified [Tomb of Mary](#), on the foothills of [Mount of Olives](#), [Jerusalem](#)

[Hyppolitus of Thebes](#) claims that Mary lived for eleven years after the death of her Son, dying in 41 AD.^[33]

The earliest extant biographical writing on Mary is *Life of the Virgin* attributed to the 7th century saint, [Maximus the Confessor](#) which portrays her as a key element of the [early Christian Church](#) after the death of Jesus.^{[34][35][36]}

A legend, which was first mentioned by Epiphanius of Salamis in the 4th century AD, purported that Mary may have spent the last years of her life in Ephesus. The Ephesian legend was derived

from John's presence in the city, and Jesus' instructions to John to take care of Mary after his death. Epiphanius, however, was keen to point out that, while the Bible says John was leaving for Asia, it specifically does not say that Mary went with him, and later he states that she is buried in Jerusalem.^{[37][38]} In the 19th century, a house near [Ephesus](#) in [Turkey](#) was found, based on the reported visions of [Anne Catherine Emmerich](#) (1774–1824), which has since been visited as the *House of the Virgin Mary* by Catholic pilgrims who consider it the place where Mary lived until her assumption.^{[39][40][41][42]} The Gospel of John states that Mary went to live with the [Disciple whom Jesus loved](#),^[Jn.19:27] identified as [John the Evangelist](#). [Irenaeus](#) and [Eusebius of Caesarea](#) wrote in their histories that John later went to Ephesus, which may provide the basis for the tradition that Mary also lived in Ephesus with John.^{[43][44]} The *Breviarium of Jerusalem*, a short text written in about AD 395,^[45] mentions in that valley *the basilica of Holy Mary, which contains her sepulchre*. Later, Saints [Epiphanius of Salamis](#), [Gregory of Tours](#), [Isidore of Seville](#), [Modest](#), [Sophronius of Jerusalem](#), [German of Constantinople](#), [Andrew of Crete](#), [John of Damascus](#) talk about the tomb being in Jerusalem, and bear witness that this tradition was then accepted by all the Churches of East and West.

Christian Devotion

Main article: [Marian devotions](#)

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Christian devotion to Mary goes back to the 2nd century and predates the emergence of a specific Marian liturgical system in the 5th century, following the [First Council of Ephesus](#) in 431. The Council itself was held at a church in Ephesus which had been dedicated to Mary about a hundred years before.^{[46][47][48]} In Egypt the veneration of Mary had started in the 3rd century and the term [Theotokos](#) was used by [Origen](#), the [Alexandrian](#) Father of the Church.^[49]

The earliest known Marian prayer (the [Sub tuum praesidium](#), or *Beneath Thy Protection*) is from the 3rd century (perhaps 270), and its text was rediscovered in 1917 on a papyrus in Egypt.^{[50][51]} Following the [Edict of Milan](#) in 313, by the 5th century artistic images of Mary began to appear in public and larger churches were being dedicated to Mary, e.g. [S. Maria Maggiore](#) in Rome.

Middle Ages

The Middle Ages saw many legends about Mary, and also her parents and even grandparents.^[55]

Since the Reformation

Over the centuries, devotion and veneration to Mary has varied greatly among Christian traditions. For instance, while Protestants show scant attention to Marian prayers or devotions, of all the saints whom the Orthodox venerate, the most honored is Mary, who is considered "more honorable than the [Cherubim](#) and more glorious than the [Seraphim](#)."^[56]

Orthodox theologian [Sergei Bulgakov](#) wrote: "Love and veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary is the soul of Orthodox piety. A faith in Christ which does not include his mother is another faith, another Christianity from that of the Orthodox church."^[57]

Although the Catholics and the Orthodox may honor and venerate Mary, they do not view her as divine, nor do they worship her. Catholics view Mary as subordinate to Christ, but uniquely so, in that she is seen as above all other creatures.^[58] Similarly Theologian [Sergei Bulgakov](#) wrote that although the Orthodox view Mary as "superior to all created beings" and "ceaselessly pray for her intercession" she is not considered a "substitute for the One Mediator" who is Christ.^[57] "Let Mary be in honor, but let worship be given to the Lord" he wrote.^[59] Similarly, Catholics do not worship Mary, but venerate her. Catholics use the term [hyperdulia](#) for Marian veneration rather than [latria](#) that applies to God and [dulia](#) for other saints.^[60] The definition of the three level hierarchy of *latria*, *hyperdulia* and *dulia* goes back to the [Second Council of Nicaea](#) in 787.^[61]

Devotions to artistic depictions of Mary vary among Christian traditions. There is a long tradition of [Roman Catholic Marian art](#) and no image permeates [Catholic art](#) as does the image of [Madonna and Child](#).^[62] The icon of the Virgin is without doubt the most venerated icon among the Orthodox.^[63] Both Roman Catholics and the Orthodox venerate images and icons of Mary, given that the [Second Council of Nicaea](#) in 787 permitted their veneration by Catholics with the understanding that those who venerate the image are venerating the reality of the person it represents,^[64] and the 842 Synod of Constantinople established the same for the Orthodox.^[65] The Orthodox, however, only pray to and venerate flat, two-dimensional icons and not three-dimensional statues.^[66]

The [Anglican](#) position towards Mary is in general more conciliatory than that of Protestants at large and in a book he wrote about praying with the icons of Mary, [Rowan Williams](#), the [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) said: "It is not only that we cannot understand Mary without seeing her as pointing to Christ; we cannot understand Christ without seeing his attention to Mary".^{[67][68]}

Titles

Main article: [Titles of Mary](#)



[EleusaTheotokos](#) with scenes from the life of Mary, 18th century

Titles to honor Mary or ask for her intercession are used by some Christian traditions such as the [Eastern Orthodox](#) or [Catholics](#), but not others, e.g. the [Protestants](#). Common titles for Mary include [Mother of God](#) (*Theotokos*), *The Blessed Virgin Mary* (also abbreviated to "BVM"), *Our Lady* (*Notre Dame*, *Nuestra Señora*, *Nossa Senhora*, *Madonna*) and the [Queen of Heaven](#) (*Regina Caeli*).^{[69][70]}

Specific titles vary among [Anglican views of Mary](#), [Ecumenical views of Mary](#), [Lutheran views of Mary](#), [Protestant views on Mary](#), and [Roman Catholic views of Mary](#), [Latter Day Saints' views of Mary](#), [Orthodox views of Mary](#). In addition to [Islamic views on Mary](#).

Mary is referred to by the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#), [Oriental Orthodoxy](#), the [Anglican Church](#), and all [Eastern Catholic Churches](#) as Theotokos, a title recognized at the [Third Ecumenical Council](#) (held at Ephesus to address the teachings of [Nestorius](#), in 431). Theotokos (and its Latin equivalents, "Deipara" and "Dei genetrix") literally means "Godbearer". The equivalent phrase "Mater Dei", (Mother of God) is more common in Latin and so also in the other languages used in the [Western Catholic Church](#), but this same phrase in Greek (Μήτηρ Θεοῦ), in the abbreviated form of the first and last letter of the two words (MP ΘΥ), is the indication attached to her image in Byzantine icons. The Council stated that the Church Fathers "did not hesitate to speak of the holy Virgin as the Mother of God".^{[71][72][73]}

Some titles have a Biblical basis, for instance the title *Queen Mother* has been given to Mary since she was the mother of Jesus, who was sometimes referred to as the "King of Kings" due to his lineage of King David. The biblical basis for the term Queen can be seen in the [Gospel of Luke](#) 1:32 and the [Book of Isaiah](#) 9:6, and Queen Mother from [1 Kings 2:19-20](#) and [Jeremiah 13:18-19](#).^[74] Other titles have arisen from reported miracles, special appeals or occasions for calling on Mary, e.g. [Our Lady of Good Counsel](#), [Our Lady of Navigators](#) or [Our Lady of Ransom](#) who protects captives.^{[75][76][77][78]}

The three main titles for Mary used by the Orthodox are [Theotokos](#), i.e., *Mother of God* (Greek Θεοτόκος), [Aeiparthenos](#), i.e. *Ever Virgin* (Greek ἀειπαρθένος), as confirmed in the [Fifth Ecumenical Council](#) 553, and [Panagia](#), i.e., *All Holy* (Greek Παναγία).^[56] A large number of titles for Mary are used by Roman Catholics, and these titles have in turn given rise to many artistic depictions, e.g. the title [Our Lady of Sorrows](#) has resulted in masterpieces such as [Michelangelo's Pietà](#).^[79]

Marian Feasts

Main article: [Marian feast days](#) (includes lists of feast days)

The earliest feasts that relate to Mary grew out of the cycle of feasts that celebrated the [Nativity of Jesus](#). Given that according to the [Gospel of Luke](#) ([Luke 2:22-40](#)), forty days after the birth of Jesus, along with the [Presentation of Jesus at the Temple](#) Mary was purified according to Jewish customs, the *Feast of the Purification* began to be celebrated by the 5th century, and became the "Feast of [Simeon](#)" in [Byzantium](#).^[80]



Village decorations during the [Feast of the Assumption](#) in [Ghaxaq](#), Malta.

In the 7th and 8th centuries four more Marian feasts were established in the [Eastern Church](#). In the [Western Church](#) a feast dedicated to Mary, just before Christmas was celebrated in the Churches of [Milan](#) and [Ravenna](#) in Italy in the 7th century. The four Roman Marian feasts of Purification, Annunciation, Assumption and Nativity of Mary were gradually and sporadically introduced into England by the 11th century.^[80]

Over time, the number and nature of feasts (and the associated [Titles of Mary](#)) and the venerative practices that accompany them have varied a great deal among diverse Christian traditions. Overall, there are significantly more titles, feasts and venerative Marian practices among [Roman Catholics](#) than any other Christians traditions.^[79] Some such feasts relate to specific events, e.g. the Feast of [Our Lady of Victory](#) was based on the 1571 victory of the [Papal States](#) in the [Battle of Lepanto](#).^{[81][82]}

Differences in feasts may also originate from doctrinal issues – the [Feast of the Assumption](#) is such an example. Given that there is no agreement among all Christians on the circumstances of the death, [Dormition](#) or [Assumption of Mary](#), the feast of assumption is celebrated among some denominations and not others.^{[70][83]} While the [Catholic Church](#) celebrates the Feast of the Assumption on August 15, some [Eastern Catholics](#) celebrate it as [Dormition of the Theotokos](#), and may do so on August 28, if they follow the [Julian calendar](#). The [Eastern Orthodox](#) also celebrate it as the [Dormition of the Theotokos](#), one of their 12 [Great Feasts](#). Protestants do not celebrate this, or any other Marian feasts.^[70]

Christian Doctrines

Main articles: [Mariology](#) and [Marian doctrines of the Catholic Church](#)

There is significant diversity in the Marian doctrines accepted by various Christian churches. The key Marian doctrines held in Christianity can be briefly outlined as follows:

- [Mother of God](#): holds that Mary, as mother of Jesus is therefore [Theotokos](#) (God-bearer), or Mother of God.
- [Virgin birth of Jesus](#): states that Mary miraculously conceived Jesus by action of the [Holy Spirit](#) while remaining a virgin.
- [Dormition](#): commemorates Mary's "falling asleep" or natural death shortly before her Assumption.
- [Assumption](#): the doctrine which states that Mary was taken bodily into Heaven either at, or before, her death.
- [Immaculate Conception](#): states that Mary herself was conceived without [original sin](#).
- [Perpetual Virginity](#): holds that Mary remained a virgin all her life, even after the act of giving birth to Jesus.

The acceptance of these Marian doctrines by Christians can be summarized as follows:^{[13][84][85][86][87]}

Doctrine	Church action	Accepted by
Mother of God	First Council of Ephesus , 431	Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Latter Day Saints (as Mother of Son of God)
Virgin birth of Jesus	First Council of Nicaea , 325	Roman Catholics , Eastern Orthodox , Anglicans , Lutherans , Protestants , Latter Day Saints
Assumption of Mary	Munificentissimus Deus encyclical Pope Pius XII , 1950	Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, some Anglicans, some Lutherans
Immaculate Conception	Ineffabilis Deus encyclical Pope Pius IX , 1854	Roman Catholics, some Anglicans, some Lutherans, early Martin Luther
Perpetual Virginity	Council of Constantinople , 533 Smalcald Articles , 1537	Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Some Anglicans, Some Lutherans, Martin Luther , John Calvin , John Wesley

The title "Mother of God" ([Theotokos](#)) for Mary was confirmed by the [First Council of Ephesus](#), held at the [Church of Mary](#) in 431. The Council decreed that Mary is the Mother of God because her son Jesus is one person who is both God and man, divine and human.^[71] This doctrine is widely accepted by Christians in general, and the term Mother of God had already been used within the oldest known prayer to Mary, the [Sub tuum praesidium](#) which dates to around 250 AD.^[88]

The [Virgin birth of Jesus](#) has been a universally held belief among Christians since the 2nd century,^[89] It is included in the two most widely used [Christian creeds](#), which state that Jesus "was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the *Virgin* Mary" (the [Nicene Creed](#) in what is now its familiar form)^[90] and the [Apostles' Creed](#). The [Gospel of Matthew](#) describes Mary as a virgin who fulfilled the prophecy of [Isaiah 7:14](#). The authors of the Gospels of Matthew and [Luke](#) consider Jesus' conception not the result of intercourse and assert that Mary had "no relations with man" before Jesus' birth.^{[Mt 1:18][Mt 1:25][Lk 1:34]} This alludes to the belief that Mary conceived Jesus through the action of God the Holy Spirit, and not through [intercourse](#) with Joseph or anyone else.^[91]

The doctrines of the [Assumption](#) or [Dormition](#) of Mary relate to her death and bodily assumption to [Heaven](#). While the [Roman Catholic Church](#) has established the [dogma](#) of the Assumption, namely that the Mary directly went to Heaven without a usual physical death, the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) believes in the Dormition, i.e. that she fell asleep, surrounded by the Apostles.^{[92][93]}

Roman Catholics believe in the [Immaculate Conception of Mary](#), as proclaimed *Ex Cathedra* by Pope [Pius IX](#) in 1854, namely that she was filled with grace from the very moment of her conception in her mother's womb and preserved from the stain of original sin. The [Latin Rite](#) of the [Roman Catholic Church](#) has a liturgical [feast by that name](#), kept on 8 December.^[94] The [Eastern Orthodox](#) reject the Immaculate Conception principally because their understanding of ancestral sin (the Greek term corresponding to the Latin "original sin") differs from that of the Roman Catholic Church, but also on the basis that without original sin.^[95]

The [Perpetual Virginity](#) of Mary, asserts Mary's real and perpetual [virginity](#) even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made Man. The term Ever-Virgin (Greek *ἀειπαρθενος*) is applied in this case, stating that Mary remained a virgin for the remainder of her life, making Jesus her biological and only son, whose [conception](#) and [birth](#) are held to be miraculous.^{[91][92][96]}

Perspectives on Mary

Blessed Virgin Mary



[Annunciation](#), [Philippe de Champaigne](#), 1644

West: [Mother of God](#), [Queen of Heaven](#), [Mother of the Church](#)

East: [Theotokos](#)

Honored in [Catholicism](#), [Eastern Orthodoxy](#), [Oriental Orthodoxy](#), [Anglicanism](#), [Lutheranism](#)

Canonized [Pre-Congregation](#)

Major shrine [Santa Maria Maggiore](#) (See [Marian shrines](#))

Feast See [Marian feast days](#)

Attributes Blue mantle, crown of 12 stars, pregnant woman, roses, woman with child

Patronage See [Patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)

Christian Perspectives on Mary

Christian Marian perspectives include a great deal of diversity. While some Christians such as Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox have well established Marian traditions, Protestants at large pay scant attention to Mariological themes. [Roman Catholic](#), [Eastern Orthodox](#), [Oriental Orthodox](#), [Anglican](#), and [Lutherans](#) venerate the Virgin Mary. This veneration especially takes the form of [prayer](#) for intercession with her Son, Jesus Christ. Additionally it includes composing poems and songs in Mary's honor, painting icons or carving statues of her, and conferring titles on Mary that reflect her position among the saints.^{[56][68][70][79]}

Anglican View

Main article: [Anglican Marian theology](#)

The multiple churches that form the [Anglican Communion](#) and the [Continuing Anglican](#) movement have different views on Marian doctrines and venerative practices given that there is no single church with universal authority within the Communion and that the mother church (the [Church of England](#)) understands itself to be both "catholic" and "[Reformed](#)".^[97] Thus unlike the Protestant churches at large, the Anglican Communion (which includes the [Episcopal Church](#) in the United States) includes segments which still retain some veneration of Mary.^[68]

Mary's special position within God's purpose of salvation as "God-bearer" (*Theotokos*) is recognised in a number of ways by some Anglican Christians.^[98] All the member churches of the Anglican Communion affirm in the historic creeds that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, and celebrates the feast days of the [Presentation of Christ in the Temple](#). This feast is called in older [prayer books](#) the [Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#) on 2 February. The [Annunciation](#) of our Lord to the Blessed Virgin on March 25 was from before the time of [Bede](#) until the 18th century New Year's Day in England. The Annunciation is called the "Annunciation of our Lady" in the 1662 [Book of Common Prayer](#). Anglicans also celebrate in the [Visitation of the Blessed Virgin](#) on May 31, though in some provinces the traditional date of July 2 is kept. The feast of the St. Mary the Virgin is observed on the traditional day of the Assumption, August 15. The [Nativity](#) of the Blessed Virgin is kept on September 8.^[68]

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is kept in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, on December 8. In certain [Anglo-Catholic](#) parishes this feast is called the [Immaculate Conception](#). Again, the [Assumption of Mary](#) is believed in by most Anglo-Catholics, but is considered a [pious](#) opinion by moderate Anglicans. Protestant minded Anglicans reject the celebration of these feasts.^[68]

Prayers and venerative practices vary a great deal. For instance, as of the 19th century, following the [Oxford Movement](#), [Anglo-Catholics](#) frequently pray the [Rosary](#), the [Angelus](#), [Regina Caeli](#), and other litanies and anthems of Our Lady that are reminiscent of Catholic practices.^[99] On the other hand, [Low-church](#) Anglicans rarely invoke the Blessed Virgin except in certain hymns, such as the second stanza of [Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones](#).^{[98][100]}

The [Anglican Society of Mary](#) was formed in 1931 and maintains chapters in many countries. The purpose of the society is to foster devotion to Mary among Anglicans.^{[68][101]} The [high-church](#) Anglicans espouse doctrines that are closer to Roman Catholics, and retain veneration for Mary, e.g. official Anglican pilgrimages to [Our Lady of Lourdes](#) have taken place since 1963, and pilgrimages to [Our Lady of Walsingham](#) have gone on for hundreds of years.^[102]

Historically, there has been enough common ground between Roman Catholics and Anglicans on Marian issues that in 2005 a joint statement called *Mary: grace and hope in Christ* was produced through ecumenical meetings of Anglicans and Roman Catholic theologians. This document, informally known as the "Seattle Statement", is not formally endorsed by either the Catholic Church or the Anglican Communion, but is viewed by its authors as the beginning of a joint understanding of Mary.^{[68][103]}

Catholic View

Main articles: [Blessed Virgin Mary \(Roman Catholic\)](#) and [Roman Catholic Mariology](#)



Madonna of humility by [Domenico di Bartolo](#), 1433; one of the most innovative [Marian images](#) from the early [Renaissance](#).^[104]

In the [Catholic Church](#), Mary is accorded the title "Blessed," (from [Latin](#) *beatus*, blessed, via [Greek](#) *μακάριος*, *makarios* and Latin *facere*, make) in recognition of her [ascension](#) to Heaven and her capacity to intercede on behalf of those who pray to her. Catholic teachings make clear that Mary is not considered divine and prayers to her are not answered by her, they are answered by God.^[105] The [five Catholic dogmas](#) regarding Mary are: [Mother of God](#), [Virgin birth of Jesus](#), [Perpetual virginity of Mary](#), [Immaculate Conception](#) (of Mary) and [Assumption of Mary](#).^{[92][106][107]}

The [Blessed Virgin Mary](#), the mother of Jesus has a more central role in Roman Catholic teachings and beliefs than in any other major Christian group. Not only do Roman Catholics have more theological doctrines and teachings that relate to Mary, but they have more festivals, prayers, devotional, and venerative practices than any other group.^[79] The [Catholic Catechism](#) states: "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship."^[108]

For centuries, Roman Catholics have performed acts of [consecration and entrustment to Mary](#) at personal, societal and regional levels. These acts may be directed to the Virgin herself, to the [Immaculate Heart of Mary](#) and to the [Immaculata](#). In Catholic teachings, consecration to Mary does not diminish or substitute the love of God, but enhances it, for all consecration is ultimately made to God.^{[109][110]}

Following the growth of Marian devotions in the 16th century, Catholic saints wrote books such as [Glories of Mary](#) and [True Devotion to Mary](#) that emphasized Marian veneration and taught that "the path to Jesus is through Mary".^[111] Marian devotions are at times linked to [Christocentric](#) devotions, e.g. the [Alliance of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary](#).^[112]

Key Marian devotions include: [Seven Sorrows of Mary](#), [Rosary and scapular](#), [Miraculous Medal](#) and [Reparations to Mary](#).^{[113][114]} The months of May and October are traditionally "Marian months" for Roman Catholics, e.g. the daily [Rosary](#) is encouraged in October and in [May Marian devotions](#) take place in many regions.^{[115][116][117]} Popes have issued a number of [Marian encyclicals and Apostolic Letters](#) to encourage devotions to and the veneration of the Virgin Mary.

Catholics place high emphasis on Mary's roles as protector and intercessor and the [Catholic Catechism](#) refers to Mary as the "Mother of God to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs".^{[118][119][120][121][122]} Key Marian prayers include: [Hail Mary](#), [Alma Redemptoris Mater](#), [Sub Tuum Praesidium](#), [Ave Maris Stella](#), [Regina Coeli](#), [Ave Regina Coelorum](#) and the [Magnificat](#).^[123]



The chapel based on the claimed [House of Mary](#) in Ephesus

Mary's participation in the processes of [salvation](#) and redemption has also been emphasized in the Catholic tradition, but they are not doctrines.^{[124][125][126][127]} [Pope John Paul II](#)'s 1987 encyclical [Redemptoris Mater](#) began with the sentence: "The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation."^[128]

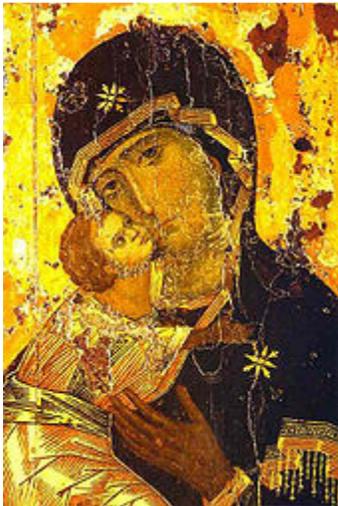
In the 20th century both popes John Paul II and [Benedict XVI](#) have emphasized the Marian focus of the Church. Cardinal [Joseph Ratzinger](#) (later Pope Benedict XVI) wrote:

It is necessary to go back to Mary if we want to return to that "truth about Jesus Christ," "truth about the Church" and "truth about man".^[129]

when he suggested a redirection of the whole Church towards the program of Pope John Paul II in order to ensure an authentic approach to [Christology](#) via a return to the "whole truth about Mary".^[129]

Orthodox View

See also: [Theotokos](#) and [Hymns to Mary](#)



[Our Lady of Vladimir](#), one of the holiest medieval representations of the [Theotokos](#)

[Orthodox Christianity](#) includes a large number of traditions regarding the Ever Virgin Mary, the [Theotokos](#).^[130] The Orthodox believe that she was and remained a virgin before and after Christ's birth.^[56] The [Theotokia](#) (i.e. [hymns to the Theotokos](#)) are an essential part of the [Divine Services](#) in the [Eastern Church](#) and their positioning within the liturgical sequence effectively places the Theotokos in the most prominent place after Christ.^[131] Within the Orthodox tradition, the order of the saints begins with: The Theotokos, Angels, Prophets, Apostles, Fathers, Martyres, etc. giving the Virgin Mary precedence over the angels. She is also proclaimed as the "Lady of the Angels".^[131]

The views of the [Church Fathers](#) still play an important role in the shaping of Orthodox Marian perspective. However, the Orthodox views on Mary are mostly [doxological](#), rather than academic: they are expressed in hymns, praise, liturgical poetry and the veneration of icons. One of the most loved Orthodox [Akathists](#) (i.e. [standing hymns](#)) is devoted to Mary and it is often simply called the [Akathist Hymn](#).^[132] Five of the twelve [Great Feasts](#) in Orthodoxy are dedicated to Mary.^[56] The [Sunday of Orthodoxy](#) directly links the Virgin Mary's identity as Mother of God

with icon veneration.^[133] A number of Orthodox feasts are connected with the miraculous icons of the Theotokos.^[131]

The Orthodox view Mary as "superior to all created beings", although not divine.^[57] The Orthodox venerate Mary as conceived immaculate and assumed into heaven, but they do not accept the Roman Catholic dogmas on these doctrines.^[134] The Orthodox celebrate the [Dormition of the Theotokos](#), rather than Assumption.^[56]

The [Protoevangelium of James](#), an [extra-canonical](#) book, has been the source of many Orthodox beliefs on Mary. The account of Mary's life presented includes her consecration as a virgin at the temple at age three. The [High Priest](#) Zachariah blessed Mary and informed her that God had magnified her name among many generations. Zachariah placed Mary on the third step of the altar, whereby God gave her grace. While in the temple, Mary was miraculously fed by an angel, until she was twelve years old. At that point an angel told Zachariah to betroth Mary to a widower in Israel, who would be indicated. This story provides the theme of many hymns for the Feast of [Presentation of Mary](#), and icons of the feast depict the story.^[31] The Orthodox believe that Mary was instrumental in the growth of Christianity during the life of Jesus, and after his Crucifixion, and Orthodox Theologian [Sergei Bulgakov](#) wrote: "The Virgin Mary is the center, invisible, but real, of the Apostolic Church"

Theologians from the Orthodox tradition have made prominent contributions to the development of Marian thought and devotion. [John Damascene](#) (c 650—c 750) was one of the greatest Orthodox theologians. Among other Marian writings, he proclaimed the essential nature of Mary's heavenly Assumption or Dormition and her mediative role.

It was necessary that the body of the one who preserved her virginity intact in giving birth should also be kept incorrupt after death. It was necessary that she, who carried the Creator in her womb when he was a baby, should dwell among the tabernacles of heaven.^[135]

From her we have harvested the grape of life; from her we have cultivated the seed of immortality. For our sake she became Mediatrix of all blessings; in her God became man, and man became God.^[136]

More recently, [Sergei Bulgakov](#) expressed the Orthodox sentiments towards Mary as follows:^[57]

Mary is not merely the instrument, but the direct positive condition of the Incarnation, its human aspect. Christ could not have been incarnate by some mechanical process, violating human nature. It was necessary for that nature itself to say for itself, by the mouth of the most pure human being: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word."

Protestant View

Protestants in general reject the veneration and invocation of the Saints.^{[13]:1174} Protestants typically hold that Mary was the mother of Jesus, but was an ordinary woman devoted to God. Therefore, there is virtually no Marian veneration, Marian feasts, Marian pilgrimages, Marian art, Marian music or Marian spirituality in today's Protestant communities. Within these views,

Roman Catholic beliefs and practices are at times rejected, e.g., theologian [Karl Barth](#) wrote that "the heresy of the Catholic Church is its [Mariology](#)".^[137]

Some early Protestants venerated and honored Mary. [Martin Luther](#) wrote that: "Mary is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin. God's grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil".^[138] However, as of 1532 Luther stopped celebrating the feast of the [Assumption of Mary](#) and also discontinued his support of the [Immaculate Conception](#).^[139]

In the text of the [Magnificat](#) (recorded in [Luke 1:46-55](#)), Mary proclaims "*My soul rejoices in God my Savior*". The personal need of a savior is seen by Protestants as expressing that Mary never thought herself "sinless".^[citation needed]

[John Calvin](#) said, "It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of his Son, granted her the highest honor."^[140] However, Calvin firmly rejected the notion that anyone but Christ can intercede for man.^[141]

Although Calvin and [Huldrych Zwingli](#) honored Mary as the Mother of God in the 16th century, they did so less than Martin Luther.^[142] Thus the idea of respect and high honor for Mary was not rejected by the first Protestants; but, they came to criticize the Roman Catholics for venerating Mary. Following the [Council of Trent](#) in the 16th century, as Marian veneration became associated with Catholics, Protestant interest in Mary decreased. During the Age of the Enlightenment and residual interest in Mary within Protestant churches almost disappeared, although Anglicans and Lutherans continued to honor her.^[13]

Protestants acknowledge that Mary is "blessed among women"^[Luke 1:42] but they do not agree that Mary is to be venerated. She is considered to be an outstanding example of a life dedicated to God.^[143]

In the 20th century, Protestants reacted in opposition to the Catholic dogma of the [Assumption of Mary](#). The conservative tone of the [Second Vatican Council](#) began to mend the ecumenical differences, and Protestants began to show interest in Marian themes. In 1997 and 1998 ecumenical dialogs between Catholics and Protestants took place, but to date the majority of Protestants pay scant attention to Marian issues and often view them as a challenge to the [authority of Scripture](#).^[13]

Lutheran View

Main article: [Lutheran Marian theology](#)

Despite [Martin Luther](#)'s harsh polemics against his Roman Catholic opponents over issues concerning Mary and the saints, theologians appear to agree that Luther adhered to the Marian decrees of the [ecumenical councils](#) and dogmas of the church. He held fast to the belief that Mary was a perpetual virgin and the [Theotokos](#) or [Mother of God](#).^{[144][145]} Special attention is given to the assertion that Luther, some three-hundred years before the dogmatization of the [Immaculate Conception](#) by [Pope Pius IX](#) in 1854, was a firm adherent of that view. Others maintain that Luther in later years changed his position on the Immaculate Conception, which, at that time was undefined in the Church, maintaining however the sinlessness of Mary throughout her life.^{[146][147]} For Luther, early in his life, the [Assumption of Mary](#) was an understood fact, although he later stated that the [Bible](#) did not say anything about it and stopped celebrating its feast. Important to him was the belief that Mary and the saints do live on after death.^{[148][149][150]} "Throughout his career as a priest-professor-reformer, Luther preached, taught, and argued about the veneration of Mary with a verbosity that ranged from childlike piety to sophisticated polemics. His views are intimately linked to his Christocentric theology and its consequences for liturgy and piety."^[151] Luther, while revering Mary, came to criticize the "Papists" for blurring the line, between high admiration of the grace of God wherever it is seen in a human being, and religious service given to another creature. He considered the Roman Catholic practice of celebrating [saints](#)' days and making intercessory requests addressed especially to Mary and other departed saints to be [idolatry](#).^{[152][153]} His final thoughts on Marian devotion and veneration are preserved in a sermon preached at Wittenberg only a month before his death:

Therefore, when we preach faith, that we should worship nothing but God alone, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we say in the Creed: 'I believe in God the Father almighty and in Jesus Christ,' then we are remaining in the temple at Jerusalem. Again, 'This is my beloved Son; listen to him.' 'You will find him in a manger'. He alone does it. But reason says the opposite:

"What, us? Are we to worship only Christ? Indeed, shouldn't we also honor the holy mother of Christ? She is the woman who bruised the head of the serpent. Hear us, Mary, for thy Son so honors thee that he can refuse thee nothing. Here [Bernard](#) went too far in his *Homilies on the Gospel: Missus est Angelus*.^[154] God has commanded that we should honor the parents; therefore I will call upon Mary. She will intercede for me with the Son, and the Son with the Father, who will listen to the Son. So you have the picture of God as angry and Christ as judge; Mary shows to Christ her breast and Christ shows his wounds to the wrathful Father. That's the kind of thing this comely bride, the wisdom of reason cooks up: Mary is the mother of Christ, surely Christ will listen to her; Christ is a stern judge, therefore I will call upon St. George and St. Christopher. No, we have been by God's command baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, just as the Jews were circumcised.^{[155][156]}

Certain Lutheran churches such as the [Anglo-Lutheran Catholic Church](#) however, continue to venerate Mary and the saints in the same manner that Roman Catholics do, and hold all Marian dogmas as part of their faith.^[157]

Methodist view

Further information: [Saints in Methodism](#)



The [Black Madonna of Częstochowa](#), Poland.

The [United Methodist Church](#), as well as other [Methodist](#) churches, have no official writings or teachings on the Virgin Mary except what is mentioned in Scripture and the ecumenical Creeds, mainly that Christ was [conceived](#) in her womb through the [Holy Spirit](#) and that she gave birth to [Christ](#) as a [virgin](#). [John Wesley](#), the founder of the Methodist Movement within the [Church of England](#), which later led to the [Methodist Church](#), believed that the Virgin Mary was a [perpetual virgin](#), meaning she never had sex.^{[158][159]} Many Methodists reject this concept, but some Methodists believe it. The church does hold that Mary was a virgin before, during, and immediately after the birth of Christ.^{[160][161]}

John Wesley stated in a letter to a Roman Catholic friend that:

"The Blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as when she brought him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin."^[159]

Article II of the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church states that:

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.^[162]

From this, the Virgin Mary is believed to be the [Theotokos](#), or Mother of God, in the Methodist Church, although the term is usually only used by those of [High Church](#) and [Evangelical Catholic](#) tradition.

Article II of The Confession of Faith from The Book of Discipline states:

“We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all persons are to be judged.”

From this statement, Methodists reject the Catholic ideas of Mary as a [Co-Redemptrix](#) and [Mediatrix](#) of the Faith. The Methodist Churches disagree with [veneration of saints](#), of Mary, and of relics; believing that reverence and praise are for God alone. However, studying the life of Mary and the biographies of saints is deemed appropriate, as they are seen as heroes and examples of good Christians.^[163] The Methodist churches reject the doctrines of the [Immaculate Conception](#) and the [Assumption of Mary](#), stating that Christ was the only person to live a sinless life and to ascend body and soul into Heaven.^[164]

Latter Day Saints

Main article: [Latter Day Saint views on Mary](#)

In the first edition of the Book of Mormon (1830), Mary was referred to as "the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh," a reading that was changed to "the mother of the Son of God" in all subsequent editions (1837–).

Nontrinitarian view

[Nontrinitarians](#), such as [Unitarians](#), [Christadelphians](#) and [Jehovah's Witnesses](#)^[165] consider Mary as the mother of [Jesus Christ](#). Because they do not consider Jesus as God, they do not consider Mary as the Mother of God or the Theotokos. Since Nontrinitarian churches are typically also [mortalist](#), the issue of praying to Mary, whom they would consider "asleep," awaiting resurrection, does not arise.^[166] [Swedenborg](#) says God as he is in himself could not directly approach evil spirits to redeem those spirits without destroying them (Exodus 33:20, John 1:18), so God impregnated Mary, who gave Jesus Christ access to the evil heredity of the human race, which he could approach, redeem and save.^[167]

Islamic Perspective

Main article: [Islamic views on Mary](#)

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned as Maryam, more in the [Qur'an](#) than in the entire [New Testament](#).^{[168][169]} She enjoys a singularly distinguished and honored position among [women in](#)

[the Qur'an](#). A [Sura](#) (chapter) in the Qur'an is titled "[Maryam](#)" (Mary), which is the only Sura in the Qur'an named after a woman, in which the story of Mary (Maryam) and Jesus ([Isa](#)) is recounted according to the Islamic view of Jesus.^[170]



Maryam (Mary) with her son Isa (Jesus), Persian miniature.

She is mentioned in the [Qur'an](#) with the honorific title of "our lady" (*syyidatuna*) as the daughter of Imran and Hannah.^[171]

She is the only woman directly named in the Qur'an; declared (uniquely along with Jesus) to be a *Sign of God* to mankind;^[Quran 23:50] as one who "*guarded her chastity*";^[Quran 66:12] an *obedient one*;^[Quran 66:12] *chosen of her mother* and dedicated to God whilst still in the womb; ^[Quran 3:36] uniquely (amongst women) *Accepted into service by God*;^[Quran 3:37] cared for by (one of the prophets as per Islam) [Zakariya](#) (Zacharias);^[Quran 3:37] that in her childhood she resided in the Temple and uniquely had access to Al-[Mihrab](#) (understood to be the [Holy of Holies](#)), and was provided with heavenly 'provisions' by God.^{[Quran 3:37][171]}

Mary is also called a *Chosen One*;^[Quran 3:42] a *Purified One*;^[Quran 3:42] a *Truthful one*;^[Quran 5:75] her child conceived through "*a Word from God*";^[Quran 3:45] and "*exalted above all women of The Worlds/Universes (the material and heavenly worlds)*".^[Quran 3:42]

The Qur'an relates detailed narrative accounts of Maryam (Mary) in two places [Sura 3](#)^[Quran 3:35] and [Sura 19](#).^[Quran 19:16] These state beliefs in both the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the Virgin birth of Jesus.^{[172][173][174]} The account given in [Sura 19](#)^[Quran 19:1] of the Qur'an is nearly identical with that in the Gospel according to [Luke](#), and both of these (Luke, [Sura 19](#)) begin with an account of the visitation of an angel upon [Zakariya](#) (Zecharias) and *Good News of the birth of Yahya (John)*, followed by the account of the annunciation. It mentions how Mary was informed by an angel that she would become the mother of Jesus through the actions of God alone.^[175]

In the Islamic tradition, Mary and Jesus were the only children who could not be touched by Satan at the moment of their birth, for God imposed a veil between them and Satan.^[176] According to author Shabbir Akhtar, the Islamic perspective on Mary's Immaculate Conception is compatible with the Catholic doctrine of the same topic.^{[177][178]}

The Qur'an says that Jesus was the result of a virgin birth. The most detailed account of the annunciation and birth of Jesus is provided in Sura 3 and 19 of The Qur'an wherein it is written that God sent an angel to announce that she could shortly expect to bear a son, despite being a virgin.^[179]

Other Views

Pagan Rome

From the early stages of Christianity, belief in the virginity of Mary and the virgin conception of Jesus, as stated in the gospels, holy and supernatural, was used by detractors, both political and religious, as a topic for discussions, debates and writings, specifically aimed to challenge the divinity of Jesus and thus Christians and Christianity alike.^[180] In the 2nd century, as part of the earliest anti-Christian polemics, [Celsus](#) suggested that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier named Panthera.^[181] The views of Celsus drew responses from [Origen](#), the Church Father in [Alexandria, Egypt](#) who considered it a fabricated story.^[182] How far Celsus sourced his view from Jewish sources remains a subject of discussion.^[183]

In Judaism

The issue of the parentage of [Jesus in the Talmud](#) affects also the view of his mother. However the Talmud does not mention Mary by name and is considerate rather than only polemic.^{[184][185]} The story about Panthera is also found the [Toledot Yeshu](#), the literary origins of which can not be traced with any certainty and given that it is unlikely to go before the 4th century, it is far too late to include authentic remembrances of Jesus.^[186] The Blackwell Companion to Jesus states that the Toledot Yeshu has no historical facts as such, and was perhaps created as a tool for warding off conversions to Christianity.^[187] The name Panthera may be a distortion of the term *parthenos* (virgin) and [Raymond E. Brown](#) considers the story of Panthera a fanciful explanation of the birth of Jesus which includes very little historical evidence.^[188]

4th-Century Arabia

According to the 4th century heresiologist [Epiphanius of Salamis](#) the Virgin Mary was worshipped as a [Mother goddess](#) in the heretical Christian sect [Collyridianism](#), which was found throughout Arabia sometime during the 300s AD. Collyridianism was made up mostly of women and even had women priests. They were known to make bread offerings to the Virgin Mary, along with other practices. The group was condemned as heretical by the [Roman Catholic Church](#) and was preached against by [Epiphanius of Salamis](#), who wrote about the group in his writings titled [Panarion](#).^[189]

Study of the Historical Jesus

To date, scholars continue to debate the accounts of the birth of Jesus from several perspectives, including textual analysis, historical records and post-apostolic witnesses.^[190] [Bart D. Ehrman](#) has suggested that the [historical method](#) can never comment on the likelihood of supernatural occurrences.^[191]

The statement in [Matthew 1:25](#) that "Joseph did not know Mary until she has given birth to a son" has been debated among scholars, some suggesting that she did not remain [perpetually virgin](#).^[192] Other scholars contend that the Greek word *hōs* (i.e. until) denotes a state up to a point, but does not mean that the state ended after that point, and that Matthew 1:25 does not confirm or deny the virginity of Mary after the birth of Jesus.^{[193][194][195]}

Other biblical verses have also been debated, e.g. that the reference in [Romans 1:3](#) of Jesus coming "of the seed of David according to the flesh" may be hypothesized as St. Joseph being the father of Jesus.^[196] However, most scholars reject this interpretation in the context of [virgin birth](#) given that Paul used the Greek word *genomenos* (i.e. becoming) rather than the word *gennetos* and the reference to "seed of David" is likely to Mary's lineage.^{[197][198][199]}

Cinematic Portrayals

Mary has been portrayed in various films, including:

- [Das Mirakel](#) (as a statue which comes to life)
- [Saint Mary \(Iranian film\)](#)
- [Mary Mother of Christ](#)
- [Mary, Mother of Jesus](#)
- [Jesus of Nazareth](#)
- [Color of the Cross](#)
- [Ben-Hur \(1959 film\)](#)
- [The Last Temptation of Christ \(film\)](#)
- [The Greatest Story Ever Told](#)
- [The Living Christ Series](#)
- [The Nativity Story](#)
- [The Miracle](#) (a remake of *Das Mirakel*, as a statue which comes to life)
- [The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima](#)
- [The Song of Bernadette](#)
- [The Passion of the Christ](#)
- [The Passion \(TV serial\)](#)^{[200][201]}
- [King of Kings \(1961 film\)](#)

Image Gallery

See also: [Life of the Virgin](#)

For a larger gallery, please see: [Marian image gallery](#)



-

The oldest-known image of Mary depicts her nursing the [Infant Jesus](#). [Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome](#) (2nd century)



-

Theotokos Panachranta, from the 11th century [Gertrude Psalter](#)



-

Visitation, from the [St Vaast](#) Altarpiece by [Jacques Daret](#), 1434–1435



-

Adoration of the Magi, [Rubens](#), 1634



-

[Black Madonna](#) and Child, [Axum](#), [Ethiopia](#)



Madonna of humility by [Fra Angelico](#), c. 1430.



Flight into Egypt by [Giotto](#) c. 1304

- *Lamentation* by [Pietro Lorenzetti](#), [Assisi](#) Basilica, 1310–1329



Assumption statue, 1808 [Ghaxaq](#), [Malta](#)

- http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8b/Tomb_of_the_Virgin_Mary._Altar.jpg

Inside of the [Tomb of Mary](#), on the foothills of [Mount of Olives](#), [Jerusalem](#)

Music

- [J.S.Bach](#): Ave Maria Prelude (1722)
- [Franz Schubert](#): Ave Maria (1835)
- [Charles Gounod](#): Ave Maria (1859)
- [Monteverdi 1610](#)

See also

A [series](#) of articles on

Mary

mother of [Jesus](#)
Chronology
[Presentation of Mary](#)
[Annunciation](#) • [Visitation](#) • [Virgin Birth](#) • [Nativity](#) • [Presentation of Jesus](#) • [Flight into Egypt](#) • [Finding in the Temple](#) • [Cana](#) • [Crucifixion](#) • [Resurrection](#) • [Pentecost](#)

[Marian Perspectives](#)
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[Catholic Mariology](#)
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• [Mariology of the saints](#)

[Dogmas and Doctrines](#)
[Mother of God](#) • [Assumption](#) • [Immaculate Conception](#) • [Perpetual Virginity](#)

Mary in Culture
[Titles](#)
• [Feasts](#) • [Art](#) • [Music](#)

This box:

- [view](#)
- [talk](#)
- [edit](#)

- [Acts of Reparation to the Virgin Mary](#)
- [Anglican Marian theology](#)
- [Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission](#)
- [Black Madonna](#)
- [Blessed Virgin Mary \(Roman Catholic\)](#)
- [Dormition of the Theotokos](#)
- [Panagia](#)
- [Christian mythology](#)
- [Fleur de lys](#)
- [History of Roman Catholic Mariology](#)

- [Our Lady of Sorrows](#)
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- [Protestant views on Mary](#)
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