



Pope Francis

Our Lady of Lourdes

What Else Does the Catholic Church Teach About Mary?

The word **dogma** refers to an official Church teaching. The dogma of the immaculate conception tells us that Mary was born free from original sin. Put another way, Mary was never controlled by hate, prejudice, greed, or selfishness. Her life was guided by love. Her motivation was love. Her decisions were based on love. There was no room in Mary's heart for sin.

This doesn't mean that Mary wasn't fully human or that she didn't feel the same emotions we feel. Actually, the opposite is true. Because sin had no power over her, there was nothing to keep her from understanding us and relating to us perfectly. Mary lived a life of faith and service, just as we strive to do.

Because she was the Mother of our Lord, neither sin nor death touched her soul or her body. The Church also teaches that, at her death, Mary was taken up, body and soul, into heaven. This is called the assumption.

Catholics also refer to Mary as ever-virgin, meaning that Mary chose to remain a virgin even after the birth of Jesus. Mary dedicated her life to the love of God.

When the Church calls Mary "the Mother of God," it does not mean that Mary was the source of Jesus' divine (godly) nature. Mary was the Mother of his human nature and there was no time when the human Jesus was not God. Mary said "yes" to being Mother to "God in the flesh."

Mary is also considered to be the "Mother of the Church." Just as she prayed with the first disciples of Jesus as they waited for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:14), so she prays continually with and for the Church today. Through her loving example, she has led many believers to the grace of God.

In praise of all that God had done for her, Mary prayed her glorious Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55). Today we are proud to be numbered among the generations that call Mary blessed.

Catholics also consider Mary to be a powerful intercessor with God—one who will pray with us and for us. While it is not necessary to ask Mary to pray for us, when we call on her, we share in her holiness and have someone praying for us who is intimately connected to Jesus. Devotion to Mary never replaces dedication to God. God and Mary are not in competition. All power, all love, all healing, all graces, come from God alone. When we pray the Hail Mary, we are asking the Mother of Jesus to present our heartfelt needs to her Son.

Praying the rosary is another way Catholics have traditionally honored Mary. This form of devotion dates back to the ninth century. As we pray the rosary, we recall important events in the life of Jesus, many of which remind us of Mary's key role in the life of our Lord and in our own salvation.

Perhaps the most important way Catholics can honor Mary is by the honest attempt to imitate her life.

"In the meantime the Mother of Jesus...is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come."

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