

CALM

CATECHISM LESSONS ON

MARY

NIHIL OBSTAT
Reverend Dwight Campbell
Censor Librorum
April 18, 2026

IMPRIMATUR
Archbishop Jeffrey S. Grob
May 7, 2026

Copyright © Schoenstatt Movement 2026.
Sr. M. Isabel Bracero, Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary.
All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Schoenstatt Editions, USA. © 2026.

Catechism Lessons on Mary
Cover by Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary.
All illustrations by Maia Wyler, Trasluz.© 2025.

Scripture quotations contained here are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

Citations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are taken from the Second Edition, 2016, revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II and includes revision of paragraph no. 2267 promulgated by Pope Francis.

Additional clarifications made in *Mater Populi Fidelis, 2025,* on the titles of the Blessed Mother are referred to in this text.
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20251104_mater-populi-fidelis_en.html

ISBN: 978-0-9720776-8-2

Printed by:
Schoenstatt Movement
W284 N 689 Cherry Lane
Waukesha WI 53188
schoenstatt-wisconsin.us

CALM

CATECHISM LESSONS ON MARY

SCHOENSTATT
EDITIONS • USA

Contents

Introduction	3
Jesus and His Mother	9
Mary and Her Son	15
Welcoming Jesus and Mary	23
Mary in the Scriptures	31
Mary in the Catechism	45
Mary in the Church	53
Mary Today	63
Mary In Our Lives	69

Introduction

Chances are that if you've converted to Catholicism, you might find it difficult to understand the role of the Blessed Mother. If you've grown up as a cradle Catholic, you might not have much more clarity about her either. Whichever is the case, you will appreciate a simple Catechism on Mary. The down-to-earth perspective of Schoenstatt's spirituality and education is a help in this regard.

I am Sister Isabel, from the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. The name already tells you that I love the Blessed Mother. I have not had any extraordinary experience or any earthshaking miracle happen in my life. The spirituality that I embrace through my community, the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, draws from a rich history of love for Mary without a Marian apparition. Rather, we have embraced a path of faith in Divine Providence as Mary did.

Mary walked this earth solely relying on God's fatherly guidance. That's how most of us walk our path of faith, too: Without mystical experiences, we perceive God's communications and make sincere efforts to respond in the best way possible. Did you know that St. John Paul II precisely highlighted this way of responding to God about Mary's greatness? Such a path can become your way to heaven, too.

He said that the "fullness of grace announced by the angel [meant] the gift of God himself." But "Mary's faith indicates [or shows us] how [she] responded to this gift."[1] Her "response of faith included both perfect cooperation with the grace of God and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who 'constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts.'"[2]

That certainly sounds like a program for a faith journey: God blesses us with gifts even if they include pain, and we respond to God with a willing disposition, knowing that the Holy Spirit will complete what we start. If you'd like to set out, Mary leads the way!

Catechism Lessons on Mary: If you're looking for summarized texts on what the Scriptures and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* say about her, you will find it here. In addition to that, you will find reflections, stories, and testimonies that will help you process information that is new or less known to you. Lastly, if you already have a deep love for the Blessed Mother, you will enjoy learning how to form your life after her example. No one prayed like her, no one loved Christ like her, no one before or after her has played the role she has in the history of salvation. Thousands of miles away from where she lived and thousands of years after her time, we talk about her, depict her, imitate her, and love her, because she continues to inspire us.

1 St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 12.

2 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

In today's culture, unsettled by individualism, violence, and anxiety, Mary has a relevant message for you and me. She knew what a violent culture that rejected Christ looked like. She witnessed the crucifixion. She knew what anxiety was all about.

Did you not know that she looked for Jesus anxiously?[3] She also knew that Christ did not want his loved ones to be alone. That's why the disciple took her into his home. "Behold your Mother!"[4] She pondered all these things deeply in her heart,[5] and because of this, she is an important source of peace for us Christians. Drawing closer to Mary means finding the same profoundly calm atmosphere that the shepherds found when they came to the stable when Jesus was born,[6] and which the disciples experienced when they gathered in prayer around her at Pentecost.[7]

If you find Mary, you will find an invaluable companion in your life, a motherly companion, a mother-heart. Finding her is like standing on a shore surrounded by restlessness and noise and looking at a sea in total calm and peace. The tranquility we take in through our senses may bring calm interiorly. Mary's peaceful heart inspires hope and peace in us.

3 Lk 2:48
4 Jn 19:27
5 Lk 2:19, 51
6 Lk 2:15-20
7 Acts 1:14

Reading through these texts should help you to get to know Mary and learn from her how to love Jesus. Therefore, this text isn't only about Catechism Lessons on Mary (CALM), that is, information for the intellect. This material is about discovering in Mary a Mother who can secure your nearness to Jesus, your love for him, and your bond with him, your covenant with God. She can help you remain serenely anchored in God. As you read through CALM, you might end up establishing a personal bond with Mary. This will bring into your life the peace and hope that comes with Mary, because she brings us Christ. Enjoy CALM.

Initial Questions

What do I admire in Mary? Why?

What do I wish I could learn about Mary?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Jesus and His Mother

A man carrying the image of the Schoenstatt Pilgrim Mother stepped into a small-town shop and asked the cashier if he would like to keep the image for a day or two. The clerk responded that they were not Catholic. The missionary carrying the Pilgrim Mother asked whether he believed in Christ. The clerk responded clearly, "Yes." He and his family were Christian. "Well," the missionary responded, "you can accept this picture of Jesus as a child where he's shown with his mother tenderly holding him." The good cashier accepted.[8]

8 Sr. M. Isabel, Personal Notes.

The Gospels make it clear that Jesus did not fulfill his mission alone. Mary appears near him several times, engaged in and surrendered to the same plan of salvation. Already in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel: 31, Mary is addressed in relation to Jesus: "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus."

Known to be born in Nazareth, most scholars agree that Mary conceived Jesus at any age between thirteen - fifteen. We don't find such details in Scripture. When Mary was twelve or thirteen, she was betrothed to Joseph (i.e., legally married under Jewish law) and he became her protector. We learn such details and additional facts about Mary, e.g. the names of her parents, Joachim and Anne, from the apocryphal work, *Protoevangelium of James*.[9]

After the birth of Jesus, Mary is described living in Nazareth with Joseph and the Child. During this period, Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt because King Herod sought to kill the child Jesus. After Herod's death they returned to Nazareth (cf. Mt 2:13-15). The period that followed is known as the hidden life of our Lord. Jesus spent these years very close to Mary. The narration of the child lost and found in the temple reminds us of how united they lived.

The *Apocrypha* are books
that relate to the content
of the Old and New Testament,
that can have historical value
but are not books of Sacred Scripture,
the revealed word of God.
Because the Church judged them
not inspired by God they were
not included in the canon,
the official list of books, in the Bible.

9 https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0847.htm.

Shortly after that, we see Jesus beginning his public ministry. In his apostolic and missionary activity, our Lord is accompanied by Mary—sometimes close by, sometimes at a distance.

From the Gospels, it is evident that the Blessed Mother was deeply concerned with her Son's fulfillment of the Father's plan. In the second chapter of Luke's Gospel: 19, 51, Mary is seen pondering deeply in her heart. She also dares to prompt the Redeemer of humanity to take his first steps as Messiah. At Cana, for example, she gently urged him to respond to the needs of the newlyweds, who ran out of wine. By doing so, she opened the way for Christ to display the power of his love and wisdom.[10] In other words, Jesus was not sent into the world alone. He was sent with Mary, and he fulfilled his mission with her at his side.

At the end of his mission on earth, Jesus is again presented with Mary near him, standing at the foot of the Cross. There, he addresses her: "Woman, behold, your son." Then he says to the beloved disciple, "Behold, your mother."[11]

Let us reflect on the following passage from the Gospel of John 2:1-12. Jesus acts upon his mother's request. Jesus comes into the public arena and is seen in his relationship to Mary. Jesus comes to aid the newlyweds through the intercession of Mary. Prompted by Mary, Jesus manifests the power of God at work in him. We, too, hope to see Jesus at work in our lives with the additional help of Mary, Mother of Christ, and Mother of all Christians.

10 Jn 2:5
11 Jn 19:26-27

The Wedding at Cana

Jn 2:1-12

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. Then he said to them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. When the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), he called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.”

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

After this, he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.

Discussion Questions

What do you find most interesting in the life of Jesus and Mary? Why does it call your attention?

Is there anything you are going through where you can ask the Blessed Mother to intercede for you or your family?

What event in your life would cause you to pray: "Lord, we have no wine…" no hope, patience, peace, support, etc.?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Mary and Her Son

"Nothing is perfect," sighed the fox. But he came back to his idea. "My life is very monotonous," the fox said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat..."

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.
"Please – tame me!" he said.

"I want to, very much," the little prince replied. "But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand."

"One only understands the things that one tames," said the fox.[12]

12 Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince.*

Taken from *The Little Prince*, this brief passage brings up a few questions. What are we willing to "tame"? What are we willing to carefully contemplate and interact with, to come closer to and get to know firsthand? What or who do we take interest in without obtaining anything for ourselves?

In the Blessed Mother's life, we see how she relates to her Son and to those in need. For example, in Luke 1:7, the angel spoke of her cousin Elizabeth, who had conceived in her old age. After that, in Luke 2:39, we see how Mary did not hesitate to cross the hill country to serve her. She went out of her way in deep union with her Son. Compelled by God's presence within her, she traveled, served, and sacrificed.

The encounter between Elizabeth and Mary shows how fruitful Mary's mission was. The secret of her effectiveness lay in her deep personal union with Jesus. Confronting the challenges of her time and culture, she is seen amidst the crowd: Looking for him, prompting him, seeking him, accompanying him. At the end of his life, she held him in her arms—just as she had at the beginning. Mary is always best understood in union with her Son. In the words of Father Joseph Kentenich (1885–1968), founder of Schoenstatt:

> Our Lady illustrates and replicates our Lord's life in a most perfect way. The two form an indivisible unity. So, the Rosary, which offers us a survey of the whole of Mary's and our Lord's life, clearly reminds us in its three parts of the joyful, oppressive, and thrilling features of both their lives.[13]

When we receive the picture of Mary with her Son, we can ask her to "tame" us. We should learn to take time and let ourselves be introduced into something that is unfamiliar to us, but which at the same time, inspires peace, trust, and brings an uplifting atmosphere into the house.

In Mary's charitable way of approaching her cousin, we learn the meaning of gift of self: Mirroring God's self-giving love.[14]

The Gift of Self
is a term coined by
St. John Paul II
which refers to one of
the most tangible ways
in which we can imitate
Christ and Mary: In
freely choosing to give
of ourselves to others.

13 Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *Sponsa Thoughts*, 1942.
14 St. John Paul II, *46th Eucharistic Congress,* Poland, June 1, 1997.

We also learn about the mystery of preserving the presence of Christ in our hearts. This inspires us to courageously and serenely face the moral confrontations we encounter, the lack of sincerity we endure, the disloyalties we suffer, the confusions we witness, and the lack of courage we reckon with. All of these are enough for us to long for Mary's quiet way of arriving into our homes and lives with the presence of her Son.

Let us take time to read the following passage from the Gospel of Luke 1:39-45, and reflect on its meaning for us, as we welcome Mary and her Son.

The Visitation

Lk 1:39-45

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Discussion Questions

Identify three key words from this passage.

What aspect of the Blessed Mother's life is the hardest for you to grasp?

If you had the chance to encounter Mary today, what would you say to her; what would you ask her?

Claudia Alves Brand Coach reallygreatsite.com

One More Question

If Mary came to the door of your house with the presence of Jesus in her heart, what do you think she would be interested in assisting you with?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Welcoming Jesus and Mary

I picked up a Rosary and I prayed it in faith, apologizing in advance if it offended our Lord, but giving to her [Mary] an intention for which I needed special grace. I must say that she responded 100-fold with graces beyond anything I expected. She also opened the eyes of my mind and heart so that I could see her Immaculate Conception, her bodily Assumption, her heavenly Coronation…[15]

15 Dr. Scott Hahn & Jimmy Akin - *Catholic Answers Live* - 04/08/20, 54:45.

This was Scott Hahn's response in a livestreamed interview to a caller who asked how he managed to cultivate devotion to Mary in his process of conversion.

To be sure, the only Savior is our Lord. St. Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 2:5, that "there is one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus." But the Catechism teaches that Mary's function as our mother "in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power..." Mary's influence in the believer "flows from the "superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it." This is why we can say that "the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation."[16]

This is how we can imitate Mary. Because we may collaborate in the work of redemption by uniting our sufferings to those of Christ. St. Paul also teaches in Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church." In this light, we can appreciate how the Blessed Mother contributes to the salvation of humanity. At the foot the cross, she united her pierced heart to that of Christ. There isn't any man or woman who came so close to our Lord as his earthly mother, our heavenly mother.

16 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), 970.

Physical union characterized the beginning of Jesus' life next to Mary. Spiritual union came more and more to the forefront as the child grew older. She remained united to Jesus in his passion and death in a profound way. The remarkable experience of the resurrection of Christ must have impacted the life of Mary, too. But it is at the peak of Christ's total surrender on the cross—an event that no one suffered through the way Mary did— when we see both of them, Christ and Mary, embracing the will of the Eternal Father in loving submission to his plan of wisdom and omnipotence.

God's omnipotence means that "we believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything.[17]

17 CCC, 268.

Adoration is directed toward the Lord, not Mary. Expressing love for Mary acknowledges God's power and kindness. Through Mary, God reveals a clear path to Christ. She leads us to him. Numerous churches, communities, states, songs, and artworks dedicated to Mary affirm her expressions in the Magnificat: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed."[18]

Father Kentenich explains how people continue to experience Mary as the woman blessed from generation to generation.

> Just as Mary brought our Lord to us, she also brings people to him. Mary knows no greater concern than to keep people in the closest possible union with her Son—just as, in our shrines, she watches with great care over the tabernacle in the life-size image of herself with Christ.
>
> *Qui me invenerit, inveniet vitam*
> *et hauriet salutem a Domino.*
>
> "For whoever finds me finds life,
> and wins favor from the Lord" (Prov 8:35).
>
> The Church applies these words of Scripture to Mary, the Queen and Sovereign. Whoever finds Mary finds life, and through her finds and keeps the source of all life: Jesus Christ.[19]

18 Lk 1:47–48
19 Fr. Kentenich, Foundation of the Marian Sodality, April 19, 1914.

Once the path into the heart of Mary is found, it can be said that one undoubtedly belongs to Christ. Her pure heart leads quickly, safely, and directly to the heart of Christ. Having been preserved from original sin, Mary stands faithfully before the throne to intercede on behalf of anyone who asks—always in keeping with the will of God. Never separated from her Son, her life reflects Christ's attributes through her holiness, humility, charity, and generosity.

After reading the following passage from the Gospels, you are invited to reflect on the effect of welcoming the "image of grace" into your home.

This is an image blessed by a priest, in the name of the Church, at a Schoenstatt Shrine, with the intention of increasing the life of grace in those who receive it. Such an image is a sacramental.

A sacramental is a dynamic sacred sign that reminds us of the sacraments and helps us grow in connection with the true fountain of grace. [20]

20 CCC, 1677

At the Foot of the Cross

Jn 19:25-27

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Discussion Questions

Have you done anything to find a deeper relationship to Christ?

Have you ever thought of the Blessed Mother as being someone who can help improve your relationship to Christ?

What petition or intention would you entrust into the hands of Mary, to be presented to her Jesus? Is there anything that troubles you in particular?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Mary in the Scriptures

"In 736 B.C., King Ahaz did not agree to join the coalition of nations to war against Assyria. When the king recognizes Assyria as a large threat, he addresses the king of Assyria. Isaiah, as a prophet in the name of God, objects to the king's recourse to this because Assyria worshipped pagan gods. In order to convince him, the prophet offers him a miraculous sign. Ahaz replies that he does not want to tempt God. But he does not know that nothing angers God more than to see him seeking help from pagan people than humbly asking for his help. Because of his lack of faith, the prophet announces to him that God himself will give him a sign: 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel'" (Is 7:14).[21]

21 Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, *Schoenstatt Youth Workbook,* USA, 2012.

This virgin foretold was born many years later; it was Mary. She is the maiden chosen by God to carry in her womb the God of Creation who became a child to save us.

In the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium*, from the documents of Vatican II, we find a concise explanation of how the Scriptures present Mary's image from the start.

> The Sacred Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, as well as ancient Tradition, show the role of the Mother of the Savior in salvation.
>
> The books of the Old Testament describe [how] the coming of Christ into the world was slowly prepared. These earliest documents... bring the figure of the woman, Mother of the Redeemer, into a gradually clearer light. When... looked at in this way, she is already prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of:
>
> - victory over the serpent which was given to our first parents after their fall into sin. (Gen 3:15),
>
> - the Virgin who shall conceive and bear a son, whose name will be called Emmanuel (Is 7:14; cf. Mi 5:2-3; Mt 1:22-23).

- the poor and humble of the Lord, who confidently hope for and receive salvation from Him,
- the exalted Daughter of Zion (Zec 9:9), and
- after a long expectation of the promise, the times are fulfilled.[22]

In the Gospels, Mary is not presented as a passive figure. At Cana, she notices the need before anyone else and prompts her Son to act. At the Cross, she stands—firm and faithful—in the most painful hour. In Acts, she perseveres in prayer with the first Christian community. Her presence in Scripture shows that she is not peripheral but central to the mystery of salvation. She does not replace Christ; rather, she always points to him, magnifying the Lord in her Magnificat.

These instances when Mary's words and presence are felt in the New Testament are few. But the Gospels allow us to glimpse into the greatness of her soul. Some snapshots of such moments follow as reflections.

22 *Lumen Gentium* 55.



Illustration by Maia Wyler

The Annunciation

Rejoice, full of grace

Lk 1:26-38

The angel is sent to a village to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. The virgin's name was Mary. Mary is the virgin chosen by God, who in her humility is surprised by the angel's greeting, which was the type used for queens: "Hail, favored one!"[23]

The angel asks her not to be afraid and goes on to tell her, "You will conceive and bear a son... he will be the son of the Most High and his kingdom will have no end...." After pondering the angel's words, Mary asks how this is possible since she doesn't have a husband. The angel answers that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her and the child to be born is the Son of God, the Messiah announced by the prophets. Mary responds, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word. With that the angel left her. Mary is the obedient woman.

23 Lk1:28



Illustration by Maia Wyler

The Visitation

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Lk 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and traveled in haste to the hill country, to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said:

"Most blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."



Illustration by Maia Wyler

The Birth of Jesus

A Savior is born to you...

Lk 2:1-20

Mary gives birth to the Son of God in the poverty of a manger after having searched for a suitable place. Without pretensions or demands, she adapts herself to the situation and together with Joseph, they place the Child God in a manger and wrap him in swaddling clothes since that's what they had at hand. In Bethlehem, we also see Mary as the woman of adoration, who presents the Christ Child to the shepherds and kings alike who have come to adore him.

The Wedding Feast at Cana

Do whatever he tells you...

Jn 2:1-12

Invited to a wedding feast, Mary notices the moment when the wine runs out. With motherly concern, she quickly but silently tries to help the couple and approaches her Son with the famous words that open the door to his ministry.



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Under the Cross of Christ:

Behold your Mother....

Jn 19: 26-27

Strong in sacrifice, Mary's heart is pierced by the painful experience of her Son's execution. The Scriptures speak of her "standing" next to the cross. This means that she did not break down. She remained; she stood. At that moment, Mary and John come to the center of this episode. The two of them offer their hearts and their company to Jesus. From his cross, Jesus makes a covenant and entrusts to each of them mutual care for the future of redemption: "Behold, your son..." "Behold, your mother."

The Coming of the Holy Spirit:

In the power of the Spirit...

Acts 1:13-14; 2:1

Mary brings about unity and inspires courage by gathering the apostles around her in persevering prayer. In her deep and outstanding way of communicating with Mary, the early Church is ready to receive the Holy Spirit.

The Canticle of Mary

The Magnificat

Lk 1:46-56

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.
The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.
He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Discussion Questions

From all these episodes in the life of Christ and Mary, which one speaks to you the most and why?

Discuss with your spouse or with a friend what elements of Mary's character you would like to stress in this time of your life?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Mary in the Catechism

A pastoral associate remembers when she was growing up in St. Symphorosa parish in Chicago and how she and her classmates struggled to memorize passages from the Catechism. One day Johnny was called upon to answer the question, "Who is God?" Johnny must not have been listening carefully when he was being drilled on the right answer (God is the Supreme Being, who created all things), because he stood next to his desk and nervously blurted, "God is the string bean who created all things."

Year after year, like Johnny, we've learned many lessons about God, the Church, and even the Blessed Mother. But, to repeat those ideas or facts, and to explain them to others in detail, remains a difficult task.

When it comes to Mary,

> What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ.[24]

In other words, through Mary we gain clarity about Christ. But what exactly does the Catholic Church teach about Mary that so resembles the life of Christ? What do we learn from the Blessed Mother that would enable us to live our faith? In her life, Mary exemplifies for us the teachings of the Catechism, through her nearness to Christ, her obedience to God's will, and her genuine concern for her family and those around her. The spirit of prayer, of the Our Father, of the Ten Commandments, and of the Sacraments is presented to us in the life of the Blessed Mother with great clarity.

The following points are the main aspects which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), highlights from the life, person, and mission of Mary.

24 CCC 484.

Mary Was Predestined.

CCC 488-489

The Heavenly Father wants everyone to be redeemed. On account of Mary's unique participation in his plan of love, of salvation, God prepared the way for her, and "willed that the Incarnation [of Christ] should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother." Already in the Old Testament the mission of Mary is prepared by the story of various holy women: Hannah, the mother of Samuel, Deborah, Ruth, Judith, and Esther, among others. When Mary is presented in the New Testament, she "stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord…, who hoped for and received salvation from the Lord."

Predestination is God's desire that all be saved: the free gift of being elected for eternal glory. Only a willful turning away would bring about the opposite. This means that God's plan includes our free cooperation with his grace.[25]

25 Cf. CCC 600, 1037.

Mary Was Conceived Without Original Sin

CCC 490-493

To say that Mary was born without stain of original sin is to say that Mary was born pre-redeemed. It means that God prepared Mary's body and soul in such a way that He worked in her also the miracle of redemption before Mary herself was born. This is known as the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In 1854, after much study on this topic from both Scripture and Tradition, and after having consulted the bishops throughout the world about their belief regarding Mary being conceived without original sin, this dogma was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX. This dogma helps us understand *how* Mary was chosen by God to be the Mother of his only Son. Through this dogma the Church presents Mary to us as:

- *Free from original sin* – Mary was born with the inner freedom to choose any option but without the inner division we bear as consequence of original sin, which hinders us from maintaining harmony and coherence between what we think, say, decide, and do.

- *Full of grace* – Mary was completely filled with divine life as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We continually strive to prepare ourselves to receive this life and to preserve it in our souls through the Sacraments, prayers, and sacrifices.

Mary is the Mother of God

CCC 494-495

This truth was declared dogma in the year 431 at the Council of Ephesus. It teaches that Mary is Mother of God because Christ was God and man.[26] Because we believe that God became incarnate in Mary's womb, we say that she is the Mother of God. She did not create or generate God but brought Him into the world after having conceived Jesus in her womb, at the Annunciation. As Christians, we consider Mary, our Mother, too, in the order of grace. We are her spiritual sons and daughters.[27]

Mary Remained a Virgin

CCC 499-507

Lateran Council I, in 649, decreed that that Mary remained a virgin before, during, and after giving birth to the Son of God. To believe this is to say that Mary was consecrated to God in body and soul.

The Holy Spirit worked the miracle of the Incarnation in Mary, who conceived the second person of the Blessed Trinity in a virginal way. Theologians compare the birth of Jesus to the sun's rays passing through glass: The rays shine through and warm the place, penetrate the environment but do not touch the glass.

26 Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, January 8, 2008.
27 CCC, 501, 968.

In fact, as the Catechism, 499, teaches: "Christ's birth did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it." Therefore, we celebrate Mary in the liturgy as the *Aeiparthenos,* i.e. the Ever-virgin.

Mary remained a virgin ever after giving birth to Jesus; she never did not have any relations with St. Joseph. The Catechism, 500, teaches that the "brothers and sisters" mentioned in the Gospels do not refer to children of the Virgin Mary; rather, they "are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression."

Mary Was Assumed Into Heaven

CCC 966-972

In 1950, Pope Pius XII declared that it is a "divinely revealed" dogma that Mary, having "completed the course of her earthly existence" was taken body and soul into heaven.

This dogma is not meant to define the kind of death the Blessed Virgin experienced but rather confirms how God treated her body and soul from the moment of her conception to her departure from her earthly existence. God freed her from the corruption and decay of the body, which is a consequence of sin in us. What the Church hopes to attain in her pilgrimage of faith, Mary has reached already. Therefore, the Catechism, 972, speaks of her as "the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come."

Discussion Questions

After reading this, think of the various petitions you would entrust into the hands of the Blessed Mother. Given what you've learned here, which of those petitions do you feel Mary will listen to with the greatest concern? Why?

When you visit a Schoenstatt Shrine, look at the image of Mary with her crown. You can think of your own way to show your love for her—like God did upon creating her and taking her into heaven in body and soul.



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Mary in the Church

> Maria Montessori, renowned in childhood development, recommended placing a family photo in your child's bedroom in a spot they can see every day. It often brings them great comfort when going through big transitions... They recognize their family and remember they are loved. [28] It gives them a sense of history, of belonging, and of continuation.

We can think of the multiplicity of Marian portraits, names, and institutions, as a gallery of family photos that one can contemplate and through it learn a fair amount of Church history. Just as we tend to have a corner where memories are recorded, connection to the Blessed Mother gives us a sense of belonging and a memory of God's love as the Body of Christ on earth. A list of highlights by century is recorded here to help you learn how love for Mary has unfolded in the Church.

28 Clare Aaker, *The Impact of a Gallery in Your Home,* madeiracreative.com, November 16, 2024.

1st Century

The writings of Paul's letters, and the Gospels of Luke, Mark, and Matthew speak of her. They recount stories that have to do with her life and with her presence in the life of Christ. The richness of these writings is not found in the number of details but in the depth of its mystery: "And, Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).

2nd Century

We begin to see inscriptions, to hear oracles, and admire paintings of Mary where she is portrayed alone or next to our Lord. For example, in the Catacombs in Rome, we find paintings depicting the Blessed Mother with the Child.

3rd Century

Artists present her much more in connection to Christ's person, mission, and history. For example, Mary is painted at the Annunciation, at the Birth of our Lord, as the Seat of Wisdom, among others.

4th Century

Among others with great minds and hearts, St. Basil, St. Jerome, begin to portray Mary in close relationship to the Church, or as a clear image of the Church. Therefore, churches, shrines, and basilicas are built in honor of Mary. Discussions that lead to the dawn of the Marian dogmas begin. A new way of venerating or of thinking of Mary gives rise to a new way of contemplating her: Not just with our heart but also with the mind. Now Mary can be known as part of our faith.

Also, the feast of the *Memory of Mary* which became the feast of the Dormition (falling asleep) of Mary, after which she was assumed body and soul into Heaven, became widely celebrate in the East by the end of the 4th century.[29]

5th Century

Proclamation of the first Marian dogma at the Council of Ephesus, 431: Mary, Mother of God. Understanding Mary's role helps solve the confusions and heresies with regard to Christ being God or not.

7th Century

Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) introduced a number of Marian feasts to the liturgical calendar. Among the most outstanding ones we find the feast of the Incarnation or the Annunciation on March 25. By the year 700 great processions were done in Rome on August 15 to celebrate Mary's Assumption into Heaven.[30]

Following Centuries

Mary's name is integrated into the Church's development and history. Her name is found throughout the liturgy in prayers and hymns. Her role as mother, as the one who brought us Christ, is celebrated in particular by the entire Church.

The regulation laid down in an earlier century reverberated through the next ones: *Let Mary be held in honor, but let no one adore her.*

29 Paul Haffner, *The Mystery of Mary,* 218.

30 Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, *The Feast of the Assumption.*

12th Century

More churches were built and more hymns were composed to honor her, and popular litanies were formulated. Communities were founded under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, like the order of our Lady of Mount Carmel, which actually traces its roots back to the Old Testament, to the prophet Elijah, 9th Century B.C. Other devotions were developed, which inspired people to live out of long-standing spiritualities and traditions like that of the Franciscans. More cathedrals, more hymns, and more paintings, all of these continue to flourish throughout the Church.

13th Century

The arguments that served to clarify the dogma of the Immaculate Conception were formulated already then, especially by the great Franciscan Marian devotee, Blessed John Dun Scotus. The highlight of this century was the effort of St. Dominic (1170-1221), founder of the Order of Preachers, to promote the Rosary as a form of prayer of meditation and intercession, which he may have learned from Cistercian monks who prayed the Marian Psalter (150 Hail Marys).[31]

31 cf. Fr. Manfred Hauke, *Introduction to Mariology,* 2021. 435-39.
Fr. Etienne Richer, *Marian Devotion, The Rosary, and the Scapular*, in Mariology: *A Guide for Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, and Consecrated Persons*, ed. Mark Miravalle, S.T.D. (Goleta, CA: Seat of Wisdom Books/Queenship Publishing, 2008), 699-704.

15th Century

People continued to experience Mary's intercession before the throne of God, especially after invoking Mary in prayer, such as the Memorare. Its most developed text comes from this century.[32]

16th Century

The Marian sodalities began in this century with the Jesuits. The remarkable apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe took place in this century and continue to reverberate among the faithful to this day. Late in the 16th Century, the Litany of Loreto, which originated in the 1200s was approved, and new titles were added.[33]

18th Century

Towns and nations were placed under Mary's patronage, especially in Europe and later on in the new world, too. In the USA, for example, we have the State of Maryland which was founded in the 1788, where the first settlers were persecuted Roman Catholics from England placed in St. Mary's City.[34]

19th Century

One of the greatest sources of inspiration regarding Mary's person and mission is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed by Pope Blessed Pius IX in 1854. Another highlight was the discovery of St. Louis de Montfort's manuscript on virtues, *True Devotion to Mary.* With it, an intense devotion to Mary came forth: Consecration to Mary. Each person can honor Mary in a distinct way, through total entrustment to her, with specific prayers and practices, taking these into everyday life.

32 *Introduction to Mariology*, 88.
33 Ibid. 444-45.
34 www.history.com, *The Settlement of Maryland*, May 2025.

20th Century: A Marian Century

In 1917, Our Lady appeared at Fatima, Portugal in what is considered the greatest Marian apparition of all time, with a peace plan from Heaven: pray the Rosary and make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. Throughout the century many popes made pilgrimages to Fatima in honor of Our Lady. The Blessed Mother's appearances there gave rise to strong Marian devotion.

In 1950, Pope Pius XII defined Mary's Assumption into Heaven as dogma and in 1954 commemorated the centennial of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception with a Marian Year.

Among the concluding documents of the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the years 1962-1965, we find one of the most complete compendiums of the Church's teachings on the Blessed Mother: Chapter 8 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium.*

In 1986-87, St. John Paul II invited the Universal Church to celebrate a Marian Year, thirteen years before the turn of the Millennium. Among the most influential Marian writings of this century are those of St. John Paul II such as his 1987 encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer).

Early in this century, in 1914, the Schoenstatt Movement was founded in a small chapel dedicated to Mary. Schoenstatt combines spiritual formation, apostolic action, and an outstanding love for Mary.

The founding of the Legion of Mary in 1921 and other pontifical writings on the topic of the Blessed Virgin Mary are remarkable Marian events of this century.

21st Century

Rosarium Virginis Mariae, written by St. John Paul II in 2002, is a highlight in Marian devotion since it added a whole set of mysteries to the Rosary: *The Luminous Mysteries*. The pontificate of St. John Paul II awakened love for the Blessed Mother as a woman of faith, igniting among the faithful their appreciation for Mary as a disciple of our Lord and the Star of the New Evangelization.

In 2025, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a doctrinal note approved by Pope Leo XIV, refining the use of titles for Mary, echoing the teaching from previous Pontiffs yet stressing Mary's role as collaborator of Christ in the work of redemption and having a mediation role subject to Christ, not parallel to his.[35]

... all ages will call me blessed.

Lk 1:48

35 www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents, *Mater Populi Fidelis*, November 4, 2025.

After reviewing these high points of devotion to Mary, we consider how a few days after taking over the office of supreme pontiff, St. John Paul II invited the whole Church to go back to the moment of the Annunciation. His message: To welcome Christ into our lives, just like when Mary conceived Jesus through her *yes.* The repetition of that *yes* provides inner strength and security in the heart of Christ. Because, in the lives of many who with the help of Mary's intercession and example, open their hearts to Christ, salvation history continues to be played—and Mary remains present.

This mystery repeated itself several times, not only in individual persons but also in communities. Some examples are the Militia of the Immaculata in1917, the Legion of Mary in 1921, other groups inspired by the Fatima apparitions in 1917, and the founding of the Schoenstatt Movement in 1914.

From among them, the Schoenstatt Movement encourages the faithful to view Mary as an educator, a teacher of faith, someone who intercedes before the throne of God for the grace to become living images of her Son. The spirituality of Schoenstatt highlights Mary's role in the plan of salvation: Collaborating in forming the Christian personality into a vivid resemblance of the Savior, through love, obedience to God's providential guidance, sacrifice in a Christ-like manner in daily life, and childlike trust in God the Father.

Discussion Questions

Which of these highlights impressed you the most? Why?

What would you prefer as your starting point to begin learning more about Mary: art, history, devotion, knowledge, or meditation? Why?

What aspect of your life right now, should be entrusted into Mary's care in a special way?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Mary Today

> We have probably been on pins and needles this week waiting for news out of Rome. After all we want to know something about what is going on at the Council in Rome—what is being said and, ultimately, what decisions are being made for us. But since there is no news so far, we must simply wait. But that does not bother us. It is, after all, a reform council. And we know what a reform council expects and demands of us—the reform of our hearts.[36]

With these words, Father Kentenich addressed the faithful people he had before him during the period of Vatican Council II. Indeed, many were nervous about the results of the Council. Even to this day, we have not been able to fully grasp the meaning of bringing to life the results of discussions that had to do with, for example, the unity of the Church, the role of the laity, and the missionary task of the Church in our times, as well as, the most effective way in which the Church can penetrate and influence the world, without falling prey to the world's sweeping tide.

---

36 Fr. Joseph Kentenich, Sermon at St. Michael's, October 21, 1962, quoted in *Exchange of Hearts* ed. Fr. J. Niehaus, 2012.

Reformation! Reforming our heart, educating our heart, is where Father Kentenich saw the skillful hand of the Blessed Mother at work in his own soul and in the soul of many people. Convinced that the Blessed Mother had special interest in the Council, he emphasized learning from Mary how to conquer for ourselves the distinct features every Catholic Christian soul needs to morally and spiritually survive the impact of today's culture.

Resembling the image of the child[37] who trusts father and mother, we should be formed into people, who like Mary, are totally abandoned to the will of the heavenly Father. We need to learn from Christ genuine trust in Divine Providence.[38] Mary lived this way to a heroic degree, that is, to the point of embracing not only ordinary sacrifices but also extraordinary ones. The Holy Spirit can work this miracle in us, too, if we let him be effective in and through us as though we were a work and instrument in his hands.

After reading the long list of Marian devotion development, we can reflect on the features of Christ and Mary we feel called to resemble. Doing so will help us discover a new devotion to Mary, a devotion that requires a decision from within. It requires the formation of the personality.

37 ... unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 18:3-4).

38 Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all (Mt 6:32).

How did the Council see the position of the Blessed Mother? "It has presented the Blessed Mother first of all as an original member of the Church and also as Mother of the Church." [39] What exactly did the Council say about Mary? The following words from Father Kentenich give us an idea:

> She calls the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice and to the love of the Father. Seeking after the Glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her exalted type, and continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things.
>
> Hence the Church, in her apostolic work also, justly looks to her, who, conceived of the Holy Spirit, brought forth Christ, who was born of the Virgin that through the Church, He may be born and may increase in the hearts of the faithful also. The Virgin in her own life lived an example of that maternal love, by which it behooves that all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of men.[40]

39 Fr. Joseph Kentenich, Sermon at St. Michaels, December 27, 1964, *Aus dem Glauben Leben,* vol. 16, pp. 10-16.
40 *Lumen Gentium*, 65.

In other words, the Marian devotion of the future is the reformation of the heart, as mentioned already. The authenticity of the next generation's love for Mary will be proven in their openness to Christ and to the heavenly Father, in the midst of daily joys and struggles.

We cannot stop contemplating and meditating on Mary's virtues and life. As we make progress in living our faith, enlivening our hope, and bringing our charity into practical life, we also see where we should be an apostle for others. Then we see that where we are called foremost to accomplish an apostolic role is *at home*—with our spouse and with our children. The Holy Spirit comes to assist us and to increase in us the grace, the strength, and the fire or zeal to fulfill this apostolic mission today.

Mary's maternal role has been recognized in all cultures and generations. Her own life is a prophecy fulfilled.[41] How can we be inspired by her example of total dedication, so that Christ can continue to walk this earth in us Christians? Repeated images of Mary should be formed, so that the features of Christ can take shape in our lives and penetrate our world today. The more we resemble Mary, the more we own the Church's love for Christ. The more we grow in love for Christ, the more we will allow Christ to be the Lord of our times. How? Transforming and reforming one heart at a time.

41 Is 7:14

Discussion Questions

How do you imagine the Blessed Mother participating in Holy Mass or in any church event?

Where do you feel the Holy Spirit needs to enter into you life with greater strength to transform you interiorly?

What aspect of the Catholic faith are you still trying to tailor to your liking instead of embracing it, even if it is hard for you?



Illustration by Maia Wyler

Mary in Our Lives

Every mountain climber has to prepare for each ascent, remain concentrated to carefully trek up the hill, and intentionally move towards the peak. But the climber also has to know how to descend. That is also part of the skill. Usually, mountain guides await the climbers, ready to show them how to best reach their goals. Someone familiar with the terrain awaits them—someone who knows the ropes.

In our daily lives, we try to live our faith and make sense out of the incomprehensible events that we encounter. At times, we may feel like a mountain climber who has to carefully measure every step, word, or sentiment that we process or express. We need someone who knows the ropes as we ascend and descend from profound spiritual experiences into the (sometimes harsh) reality of daily life.

The Blessed Mother is this skillful hand for us. Like a mountain guide, Mary has assisted many saints along the way in imitating her because she embodies the attitude and disposition of soul of her Son. Mary, our mother and educator, can intercede for us before God.

One very simple and practical way in which we can do so is by collaborating with her work of education and entrusting ourselves to her through a prayer of consecration.

My Queen, My Mother,
I give myself entirely to you,
and to show my devotion to you,
I consecrate to you this day
my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart,
my entire self without reserve.
As I am your own, my good Mother,
guard me and defend me
as your property and possession. Amen.

In *this* little consecration prayer, we consecrate our eyes, our ears, our mouth, our heart to the Blessed Mother. The purpose of these words is to place our faculties into the hands of the Mother of God. She blesses all our faculties, as well as our body and soul. She grants us the grace of transformation, so that these faculties may remain attentive, willing, and capable of promptly responding to the will of God. She educates our senses, so we can preserve them pure and noble through what we absorb or express.

We consecrate our eyes to her so that they will see what Mary's eyes were able to discern during her life on earth: The light of God behind all events, in spite of darkness, cross, and suffering. Like her, we begin to see the purpose of our life more clearly and to practice the most essential, true, and lasting values in life. Our eyes become kind, pure, merciful, and alert to the wish of God and the needs of others.

We consecrate our ears so that they will be attuned to what Mary's ears heard: The voice of God as he speaks to us through daily events, through others, through the inspirations of grace. We try to become attuned to hearing, so we can more easily distinguish the true voice of God in the midst of the confusing voices of our time. We consecrate our ears so that we can obediently listen to God in our lives.

We consecrate our mouth to her, so that we may speak words of kindness and forgiveness, of understanding and goodness, of surrender and trust. Like Mary, we will proclaim the praises of God, understand the silence of prayer, and express the gratitude of a child that recognizes God's everlasting, fatherly care.

We consecrate our heart to the Blessed Mother, so that like her we can love God, and all that God loves, the way God loves. Our sentiments of appreciation or rejection pass through our hearts. We place all of this into Mary's heart, and ask her to give us her heart, her sentiments, her disposition, her love.[42]

42 Sr. M. Thomasine, ed. Sr. M. Isabel, *Introductory Series* #4, *Covenant in Daily Life*, 1984, 2022.

Discussion Questions

Certainly, our senses are constantly exposed to all sorts of impressions that leave their mark in our person. How can the daily Consecration to Mary be a protection for our senses?

Formulate a resolution that would enable you to imitate the Blessed Mother, that would enable you to resemble Christ. It may include how you interact with others in your surroundings or at work.

Do you have a favorite prayer to Mary? What is it?

May the Mother of Christianity
take the destiny of our modern,
confused world into her powerful,
wise, and kind hands...
What the Star of the Sea meant to the
seafarers of old is what Mary means to us:
a guide and salvation from all storms.
Are we not also constantly surrounded
by the violent waves
of life... How much joy and calm
and security is imparted to us when,
in such situations,
Mary, the Star of the Sea
appears before us through the clouds!

Fr. Joseph Kentenich (1885-1968)
Lenten Sermons, Milwaukee, *1954.*

CALM: Catechism Lessons on Mary
If you're looking for summarized texts on what the Scriptures and the Catechism of the Catholic Church say about her, you will find it here. In addition to that, you will find reflections, stories, and testimonies that will help you process information that is new or less known to you—most of them inspired in the Schoenstatt spirituality.

SCHOENSTATT
EDITIONS • USA