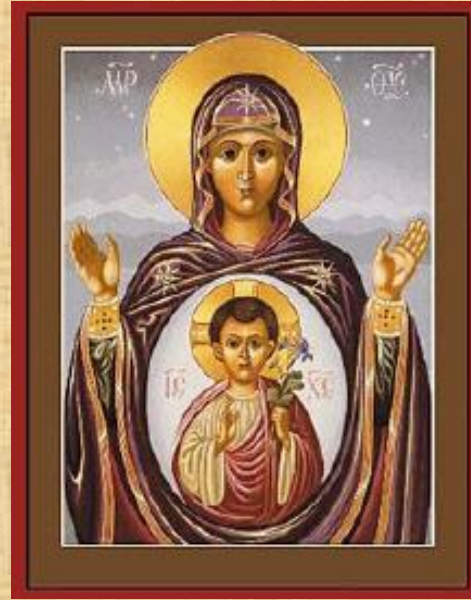


# THE VIRGIN BIRTH



## MARY EVER-VIRGIN: BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE BIRTH OF JESUS

**The Catholic Church has believed,  
from Post-Apostolic times (after 100 AD),  
that Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of Jesus,  
was a Virgin before, during and after  
she gave birth to Jesus**

Belief statements using the words “ever” or “perpetual” mean “before, during, and after” the birth of Jesus.

This belief was defined first in the Lateran Council in **649**, under **Pope Martin I**: *“The blessed ever-virginal and immaculate Mary . . . conceived without sin, of the Holy Spirit, generated without injury (to her virginity), and her virginity continued unimpaired after the birth.”*

This was followed in **1555** when **Pope Paul IV** declared: *“The most blessed Virgin Mary . . . always persisted in the integrity of virginity, namely. before bringing forth, at bringing forth, and always after bringing forth . . .”*

Preparatory to understanding this defined dogma, a number of points needs to be made.

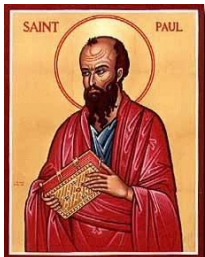
One has to remember that, for Catholics, the sources of beliefs include (1) the Word of God as revealed in the Bible, and (2) the Word of God revealed as passed down through the ages--*paradosis* as St. Paul called it--in the constant faith of the Church known as “tradition.”

It is equally important to refresh our Faith that

- (1) the Church is the Body of Christ;
- (2) the Bishop of Rome, Successor of St. Peter, is heir to the gift of the keys to which Jesus refers in Matthew 16:16; and the bishops of the world are successors to the Apostles (Matthew 18);
- (3) faith is developmental--not all truths revealed during Christ's lifetime were written down;
- (4) among the “trustworthy men” of St. Paul's letters are the great Fathers and Doctors of the history of the Church; and
- (5) truths of the Church are hierarchical.

# The Church is the Body of Christ

## Ephesians 1:22-23



And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for **the church, which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

## Ephesians 4:12

... equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up **the body of Christ**;

## 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

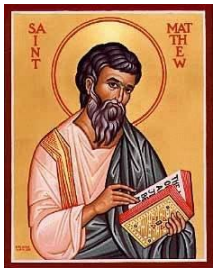
The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they **form one body. So it is with Christ.** For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

## 1 Corinthians 12:27-28

Now **you are the body of Christ**, and each one of you is a part of it.

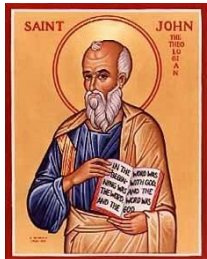
**The Bishop of Rome, successor of St. Peter,  
is heir to the gift of the keys to which  
Jesus refers in Matthew 16:16;  
and the bishops of the world are successors to the  
Apostles**

**Matthew 16:15-19**



He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. **I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;** and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

**John 16:12-13**



"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, **the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.**"

# The Teaching Authority

Matthew 16

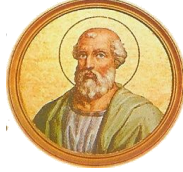


**PETER**

BISHOP OF ROME d., 67 AD



**LINUS**, 67-79



**ANACLETUS**, 79-92



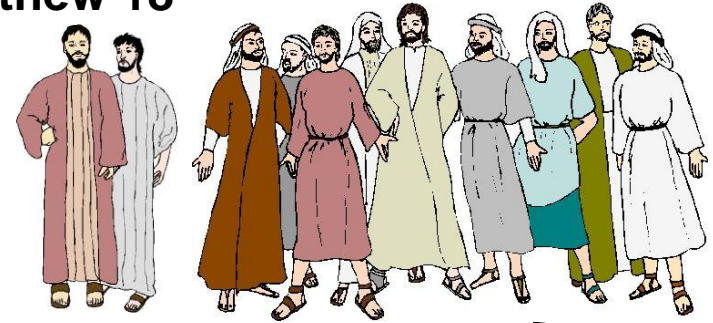
**CLEMENT**, 92-101

UNBROKEN  
SUCCESSION



**BENEDICT XVI**, 2004 -

Matthew 18



**THE ELEVEN**



**PAUL BARNABAS**

**Acts 13:3-4**

UNBROKEN  
SUCCESSION

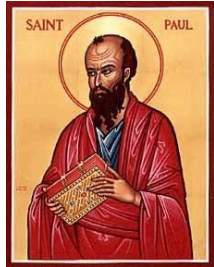
**BISHOPS OF THE WORLD  
FOR ALL TIME**





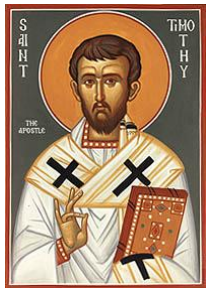
# Some of the “trustworthy men” of St. Paul’s letters are the great Fathers and Doctors of the history of the Church.

## 1 Corinthians 11:23



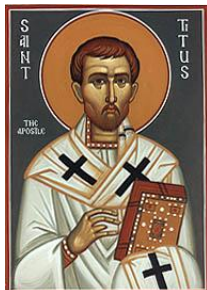
For I **received** from the Lord what I also **handed on** to you . . .

## 2 Timothy 2:2



And what you heard from me through many witnesses **entrust** (**parathou**) **to faithful people** who will have the ability to teach others as well.

## Titus 1:9

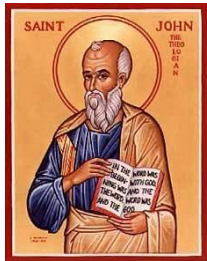


. . . **(hold) fast to the true message as taught** so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents.

# Faith is developmental-- not all truths revealed during Christ's lifetime were written down

The Church also knows that the constant and continuing Faith of the Church is not all written down and that our Faith is developmental--that is, the longer men and women of faith deliberate on the scriptures and in prayer, seek the Holy Spirit, the more Divine Revelation is clarified.

## John 16:12-13



I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, **the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.**

## John 21:25

There are also many **other things that Jesus did**, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think **the whole world would contain the books that would be written.**



When the Catholic Church appears to teach "new doctrines" about Mary, it is often a statement of truth against some current errors or a clarification of truths that have always been taught and believed by Christians through the centuries.

The Church believes that handing on these truths participates in the admonition of Paul.

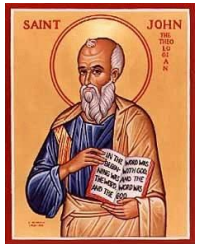
## 2 Thessalonians 2:15



Therefore, brothers, **stand firm and hold fast to the traditions** that you were taught, either by **an oral statement (*our word*)** or by a letter (*written tradition*) of ours.

Catholics believe that the understanding of the Church about Mary, as about all Christian truths (e.g., the understanding of the Trinity), deepens and becomes more accurate over the centuries under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## John 15:26



When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth** that proceeds from the Father, he will **testify to me**.

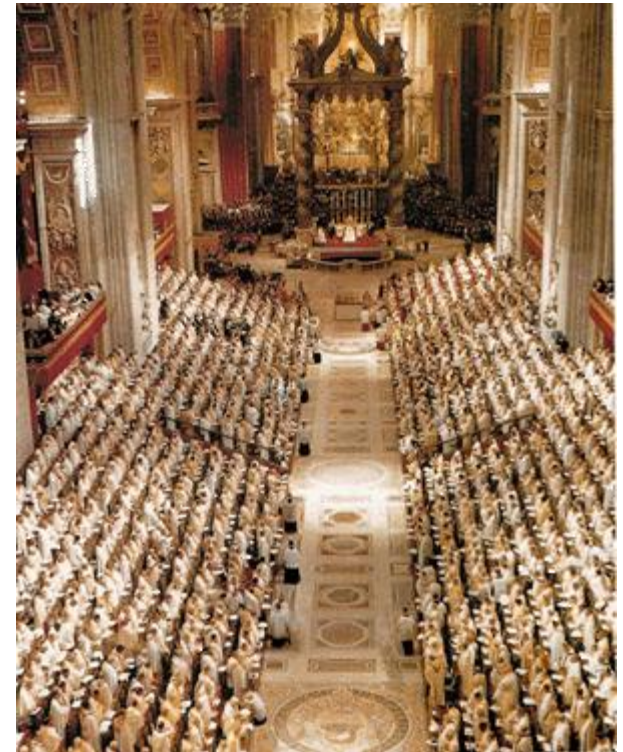


# Truths are hierarchical

It was the Second Vatican Council in the 60s that also reminded believers that **the truths of the Church are hierarchical**, that is, while truth remains, there is a level of importance of truths to our salvation, e.g., that Jesus is Lord is more important than the virginity of Mary. The belief that Mary was ever a Virgin remains true, it neither equals nor surpasses the truth of the divinity of Jesus. All truth is to be believed.

## Vatican Council II, *On Ecumenism*, No. 11

... in Catholic doctrine **there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths**, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith.

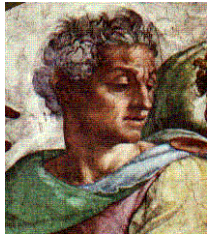


# The Virginity of Mary in Scripture

Christians accept from Holy Scripture the belief that Mary of Nazareth, mother of the Lord, was a virgin.

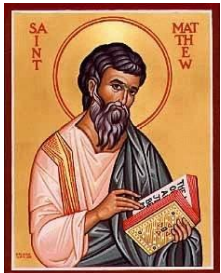


## Isaiah 7:14



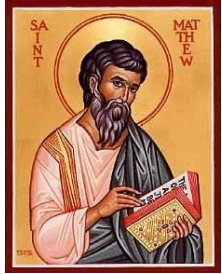
The **virgin** shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

## Matthew 1:22-23



All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Behold, **the virgin** shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us."

## Matthew 1:18-25



Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but **before they lived together**, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Behold, **the virgin** shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. **He had no relations with her** until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

## Luke 1:26-27



In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to **a virgin** betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and **the virgin's name was Mary**.

## Luke 1:34-35

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since **I have no relations with a man**?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."



# The Perpetual Virginity of Mary in Extra-Biblical Literature

***Protoevangelium of James***, c. 120 AD (Memories of Mary's life were still vivid in the minds of people.)

"And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by [St. Anne], saying, 'Anne! Anne! The Lord has heard your prayer, and you shall conceive and shall bring forth, and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world.' And Anne said, 'As the Lord my God lives, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God, and it shall minister to him in the holy things all the days of its life.' . . . And [from the time she was three] Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there" (4, 7).

"And when she was twelve years old there was held a council of priests, saying, 'Behold, Mary has reached the age of twelve years in the temple of the Lord. What then shall we do with her, lest perchance she defile the sanctuary of the Lord?' And they said to the high priest, 'You stand by the altar of the Lord; go in and pray concerning her, and whatever the Lord shall manifest to you, that also will we do.' . . .





[A]nd he prayed concerning her, and behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him saying, 'Zechariah! Zechariah! Go out and assemble the widowers of the people and let them bring each his rod, and to whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, his wife shall she be. . . . And Joseph [was chosen]. . . . And the priest said to Joseph, 'You have been chosen by lot to take into your keeping the Virgin of the Lord.' But Joseph refused, saying, 'I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl'" (8–9).

"And Annas the scribe came to him [Joseph] . . . and saw that Mary was with child. And he ran away to the priest and said to him, 'Joseph, whom you did vouch for, has committed a grievous crime.' And the priest said, 'How so?' And he said, 'He has defiled the virgin whom he received out of the temple of the Lord and has married her by stealth'" (5).

"And the priest said, 'Mary, why have you done this? And why have you brought your soul low and forgotten the Lord your God?' . . . And she wept bitterly saying, 'As the Lord my God lives, I am pure before him, and know not man'" (5).

## Origin (248 AD)

"The Book [the *Protoevangelium*] of James [records] that the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former wife, whom he married before Mary. Now those who say so wish to preserve the honor of Mary in virginity to the end, so that body of hers which was appointed to minister to the Word . . . might not know intercourse with a man after the Holy Spirit came into her and the power from on high overshadowed her. And I think it in harmony with reason that Jesus was the firstfruit among men of the purity which consists in [perpetual] chastity, and Mary was among women. For it were not pious to ascribe to any other than to her the first fruit of virginity" (*Commentary on Matthew 2:17* ).

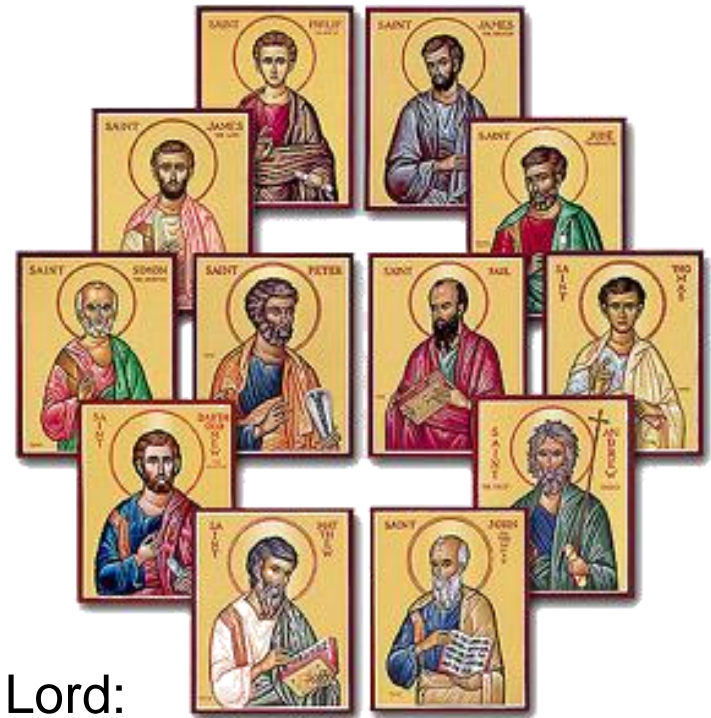
## Hilary of Poitiers (354 AD)

"If they [the brethren of the Lord] had been Mary's sons and not those taken from Joseph's former marriage, she would never have been given over in the moment of the passion [crucifixion] to the apostle John as his mother, the Lord saying to each, 'Woman, behold your son,' and to John, 'Behold your mother' [John 19:26–27), as he bequeathed filial love to a disciple as a consolation to the one desolate" (*Commentary on Matthew 1:4*).

# The Virginity of Mary in the Creeds of the Church

## Apostles Creed (215 AD - 700 AD)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:  
Who was **conceived of the Holy Spirit,**  
**born of the Virgin Mary,**  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried . . .



## Nicene Creed (325 AD)

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was **incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary**  
and became truly human . . .



# The Virginity of Mary in the Magisterium of the Church

**General Council of Chalcedon** (451), DS, 148; Mansi 7.462

Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . indeed born of the Father before the ages according to divine nature, but in the last days the same born of the virgin Mary, Mother of God according to human nature ["as was fitting for God, He sealed her womb." The Greek has "sphragisanta." In context, it refers to after birth. Yet that would seem to imply a belief in physical integrity "in partu." ]

**Council of Constantinople II**, Fifth Ecumenical Council (553)

**Canon 2** If anyone does not confess that there are two generations of the Word of God, the one from the Father before the ages, without time and incorporeally, the other in the last days. when the same came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the holy and glorious **Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary**, and was born of her, let such a one be anathema.

451 553



100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 1100 1200 1300 1400 1500 1600 1700 1800 1900 2000

## Lateran Council, Pope Martin I (649)



**Canon 3** If anyone does not properly and truly confess in accord with the holy Fathers, that **the holy Mother of God and ever Virgin and Immaculate Mary** in the earliest of ages conceived of the Holy Spirit without seed, namely God the Word Himself specifically and truly, who was born of God the Father before all ages, and that **she incorruptibly bore Him, her virginity remaining indestructible even after His birth**, let him be condemned.



## Vatican Council II, 1962-65, *Lumen Gentium*, 57

This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is evident from the time of the virginal conception of Christ even to His death... [and] **when the Mother of God brought forth her firstborn, who did not diminish but consecrated her virginal integrity.**





**John Paul II**, January 28, 1988

Mary was therefore **a virgin before the birth of Jesus and she remained a virgin in giving birth and after the birth**. This is the truth presented by the New Testament texts, and which was expressed both by the Fifth Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 553, which speaks of Mary as 'ever virgin', and also by the Lateran Council in 649, which teaches that the mother of God...Mary...conceived [her Son] through the power of the Holy Spirit without human intervention, and **in giving birth to him, her virginity remained incorrupted, and even after the birth her virginity remained intact**.



# Fathers and Doctors of the Church through History



**St. Justin (100 - 165)**

*Dialogia contra Trypho*, Chapter 84

"Moreover, the prophecy, 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' was uttered respecting Him. For if He to whom Isaiah referred was not to be begotten of a virgin, of whom did the Holy Spirit declare, 'Behold, the Lord Himself shall give us a sign: behold, **the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son**?' For if He also were to be begotten of sexual intercourse, like all other first-born sons, why did God say that He would give a sign which is not common to all the first-born sons?



## St. Irenaeus (c. 130-202), *Book III*, 21

God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, **giving us the token of the Virgin**. But not as some allege, among those now presuming to expound the Scripture, [thus:] "Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bring forth a son,"(10) as Theodotion the Ephesian has interpreted, and Aquila of Pontus,(11) both Jewish proselytes. The Ebionites, following these, assert that He was begotten by Joseph; thus destroying, as far as in them lies, **such a marvelous dispensation of God**, and setting aside the testimony of the prophets which proceeded from God.



## Tertullian (160-225), *Adversus Marcion Chapter 13*

Well, but nature, says he (Marcion), does not permit "a virgin to conceive," and still the prophet is believed. And indeed very properly; for he has paved the way for the incredible thing being believed, by giving a reason for its occurrence, in that it was to be for a sign. "Therefore," says he, "the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." Now a sign from God would not have been a sign, unless it had been some novel and prodigious thing. Then, again, Jewish cavilers, in order to disconcert us, boldly pretend that Scripture does not hold that a virgin, but only a young woman, is to conceive and bring forth. They are, however, refuted by this consideration, that nothing of the nature of a sign can possibly come out of what is a daily occurrence, the pregnancy and child-bearing of a young woman. **A virgin mother is justly deemed to be proposed by God as a sign**, but a warlike infant has no like claim to the distinction; for even in such a case there does not occur the character of a sign. But after the sign of the strange and novel birth has been asserted, there is immediately afterwards declared as a sign the subsequent course of the Infant, who was to eat butter and honey.

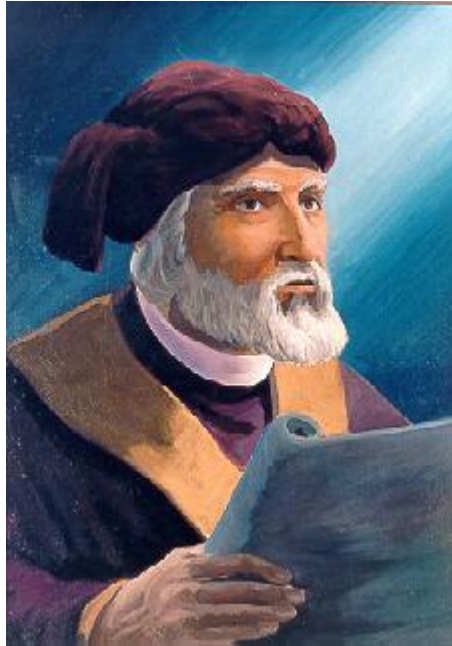


## **Tertullian** (160-225), *Adversus Judaeus*. Chapter IX

Begin we, therefore, to prove that the birth of Christ was announced by prophets; as Isaiah (e.g.,) foretells, "Hear ye, house of David; no petty contest have ye with men, since God is proposing a struggle. Therefore God Himself will give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and ye shall call his name Emmanuel" (which is, interpreted, "God with us"): "butter and honey shall he eat;" "since, ere the child learn to call father or mother, he shall receive the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria, in opposition to the king of the Assyrians." . . .

But a sign from God, unless it had consisted in some portentous novelty, would not have appeared a sign. In a word, if, when you are anxious to cast any down from (a belief in) this divine prediction, or to convert whoever are simple, you have the audacity to lie, as if the Scripture contained (the announcement), that not "a virgin," but "a young female," was to conceive and bring forth; you are refuted even by this fact, that a daily occurrence--the pregnancy and parturition of a young female, namely--cannot possibly seem anything of a sign. ~

And the setting before us, then, of **a virgin-mother is deservedly believed to be a sign**; but not equally so a warrior-infant. For there would not in this case again be involved the question of a sign; but, the sign of a novel birth having been awarded, the next step after the sign is, that there is enunciated a different ensuing ordering of the infant, who is to eat "honey and butter."





**Origen** (185-232), *Adversus Celsus*, Book 1, Chapter 35

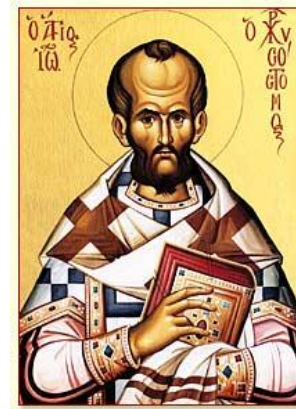
The Lord is related to have spoken to Ahaz thus: "Ask a sign for thyself from the LORD thy God, either in the depth or height above; " and afterwards the sign is given, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." What kind of sign, then, would that have been--a young woman who was not a virgin giving birth to a child? And which of the two is the more appropriate as the mother of Immanuel (i.e., "God with us"),--whether a woman who has had intercourse with a man, and who has conceived after the manner of women, or **one who is still a pure and holy virgin?** ~

But that which is truly a sign, and which was to be made trustworthy to mankind,--namely, that **the first-begotten of all creation should become incarnate by the Virgin's womb**, and be a child,--this he anticipated by the Spirit of prophecy, and predicted it, as I have repeated to you, in various ways; in order that, when the event should take place, it might be known as the operation of the power and will of the Maker of all things; just as Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs, and as all living beings were created in the beginning by the word of God. But you in these matters venture to pervert the expositions which your elders that were with Ptolemy king of Egypt gave forth, since you assert that the Scripture is not so as they have expounded it, but says, 'Behold, the young woman shall conceive,' as if great events were to be inferred if a woman should beget from sexual intercourse: which indeed all young women, with the exception of the barren, do; but **even these, God, if He wills, is able to cause [to bear]**.



## St. John Chrysostom (c. 347 - 407)

*Homily III: Matthew I. 1.*

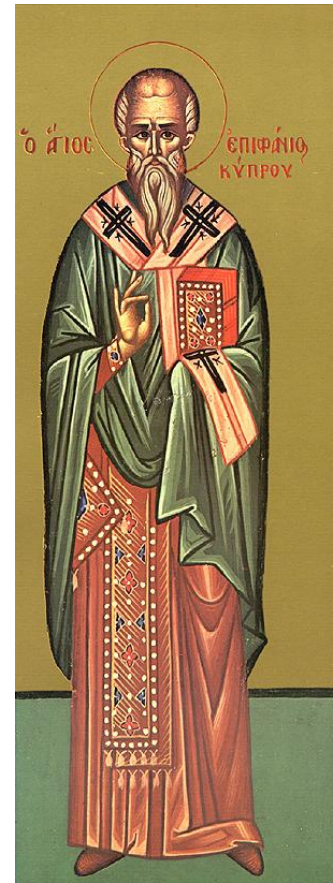


But what kind of marvel? it may be asked. That the Virgin should be preserved, and delivered from evil suspicion. For if this had been discovered by the Jews from the beginning, they would have stoned the Virgin, making the report a handle for mischief, and would have condemned her for adultery. For if in regard to the other matters, for which they had frequent precedents likewise in the old dispensation, they were quite shameless in their obstinacy (for so, because He had cast out devils, they called Him possessed; and because He healed on the Sabbath day, they supposed Him to be an adversary of God; and yet oftentimes even before this had the Sabbath been broken), what would they not have said, if this had been told them? Especially as they had all time before this on their side, in that it never had produced any such thing. **For if after so many miracles they still called Him son of Joseph, how before the miracles would they have believed that He was born of a virgin?**

347-407

## St. Epiphanius (310-403) *Haereses*, 28, n. 7

But then, everything could not have been fulfilled in her [Eve] in the fullest sense. It will, however, be fulfilled really in **the holy Seed, the chosen and singular Seed, who was found [conceived] only of Mary, without marital relation with a man.**

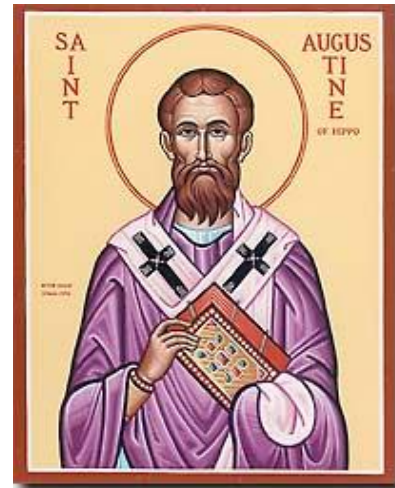


**St. Prudentius** (d. after 405), of Spain, *Cathemerinon*, 3, vss. 146-150 *PL* 59, 805f; Bergman", *CSEL* 61 (1926), 17.

This was that ancient hatred, this was the fierce enmity between the asp and man, which, now that the serpent is prostrate, is crushed under the woman's feet. For having merited to bring forth God, **the Virgin makes all poisons powerless.**

348?-405  
310-403





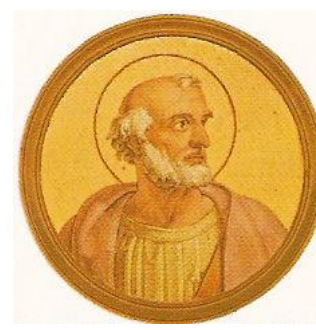
**St. Augustine** (401), *Holy Virginity*, 4:4

"In being born of a Virgin **who chose to remain a Virgin** even before she knew who was to be born of her, Christ wanted to approve virginity rather than to impose it. And he wanted virginity to be of free choice even in that woman in whom he took upon himself the form of a slave."

**St. Augustine** (411), *Sermons* 186:1

"It was not the visible sun, but its invisible Creator who consecrated this day for us, when the Virgin Mother, fertile of womb and integral in her virginity, brought him forth, made visible for us, by whom, when he was invisible, she too was created. A Virgin conceiving, a Virgin bearing, a Virgin pregnant, **a Virgin bringing forth**, a Virgin perpetual. Why do you wonder at this, O man?"

**Pope Leo the Great** (d. 461), *Sermo 22, De nativitate Domini*, 2, 1: PL 54, 194A.



For the mystery of our salvation is recalled by the annual cycle—the mystery that was promised from the beginning, that was given in the end, and that remains without end, . . . For God who is all-powerful and merciful, whose very nature is goodness, and whose will is power and whose work is mercy, designated, in the very beginning of the world, as soon as the diabolic malice killed us by the poison of his envy, the remedies of His mercy, prepared for us mortal men who had to be redeemed. He announced to the serpent that a Seed of a woman would come who would crush by His power the haughtiness of the guilty head. By that **He signified that Christ, who would come in the flesh, to be God and Man, who, born of the Virgin, would by His incorrupt birth condemn the violator of the human race.**

**Pope Leo the Great**, *Tome to Flavian*, DS 291

She **brought Him forth without the loss of virginity** even as she conceived Him without its loss.

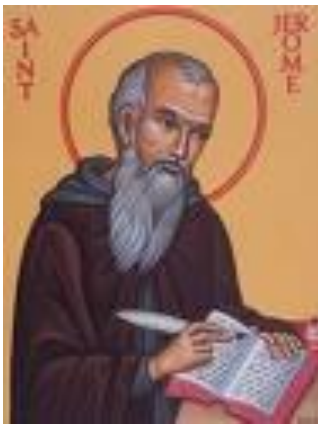
r. 440-61

## **Chrysippus, Priest of Jerusalem (d. 479)**

*Oratio in S. Mariam Deiparam*, # 3; ed. M. Jugie, A.A., *Homélie, mariales byzantines*, in *PO* 19 (1926) 340f.

What then, what is the enemy of the human race likely to say to himself when now he sees us called back to the pristine adoption of sons through a woman? Does he not ask repeatedly and lament: "How does it happen that the instrument which was my colleague in the beginning, is now my enemy? A woman co-operated with me to obtain tyrannical power over the race, and a woman has evicted me from that tyrannical power. The ancient Eve exalted me, but the new Eve deposed me. Really, Eve is even now the same according to nature, though she is not Eve according to the generation. For what woman was able to give birth to such a wonderful Child, or **to conceive without being subject to any corruption of intercourse? She became a mother without loss of virginity;**





**St. Jerome (340 - 420)**  
*against Helvidius*

And in turn we rejoin that he had certainly heard him say, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife." The reason why he was forbidden to forsake his wife was that he might not think her an adulteress. Is it true then, that he was ordered not to have intercourse with his wife? Is it not plain that the warning was given him that he might not be separated from her? And could the just man dare, he says, to think of approaching her, when he heard that the Son of God was in her womb? Excellent ! We are to believe then that the same man who gave so much credit to a dream that he did not dare to touch his wife, yet afterwards, when he had learnt from the shepherds that the angel of the Lord had come from heaven and said to them, "Be not afraid: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord;" ~



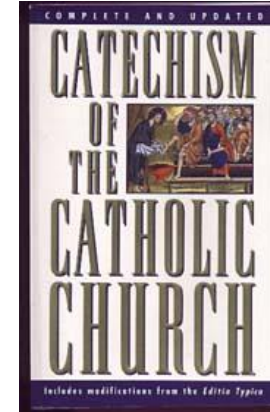
and when the heavenly host had joined with him in the chorus "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will; "and when he had seen just Simeon embrace the infant and exclaim, "Now let thou thy servant depart, O Lord, according to thy word in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" and when he had seen Anna the prophetess, the Magi, the Star, Herod, the angels; Helvidius, I say, **would have us believe that Joseph, though well acquainted with such surprising wonders, dared to touch the temple of God, the abode of the Holy Ghost, the mother of his Lord?** Mary at all events "kept all these sayings in her heart." You cannot for shame say Joseph did not know of them, for Luke tells us, "His father and mother were marveling at the things which were spoken concerning Him." And yet you with marvelous effrontery contend that the reading of the Greek manuscripts is corrupt, although it is that which nearly all the Greek writers have left us in their books, and not only so, but several of the Latin writers have taken the words the same way. Nor need we now consider the variations in the copies, since the whole record both of the Old and New Testament has since that time been translated into Latin, and we must believe that the water of the fountain flows purer than that of the stream.





# Catechism of the Catholic Church

As an authoritative voice of Church Teaching in this century, **the Catechism** addresses the Faith of the Church in the Virgin Birth.



**510** Mary "remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, **a virgin in giving birth to him**, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, **always a virgin**" (St. Augustine, *Serm.* 186, 1: PL 38, 999): with her whole being she is "the handmaid of the Lord" (*Lk* 1:38).

**499** The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess **Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth** to the Son of God made man. In fact, **Christ's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it."** And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the "**Ever-virgin**".

## Some Objections to Continued Virginity

There are some very common objections to the belief that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus. The **first objection** considers the "brothers" And "sisters" of Jesus from the Gospels.

### **Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19**

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers (*adelphoi*) appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. (Someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers (*adelphoi*) are standing outside, asking to speak with you.") But he said in reply to the one who told him, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers (*adelphoi*)?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers (*adelphoi*). For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother (*adelphos*), and sister (*adelphe*), and mother."

### **Mark 6:3**

Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother (*adelphos*) of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters (*adelphe*) here with us?

First **it is important to note** that the Bible does not say that these "brothers and sisters" of Jesus were children of Mary.

Second, the word for brother (or sister), *adelphos* (*adelpa*) in Greek, denotes a brother or sister, or near kinsman. Aramaic and other Semitic languages could not distinguish between a blood brother or sister and a cousin, for example. Hence, John the Baptist, a cousin of Jesus (the son of Elizabeth, cousin of Mary) would be called "a brother (*adelphos*) of Jesus." In the plural, the word means a community based on identity of origin or life.



Additionally, the word *adelphos* is used for

- ✓ 1) male children of the same parents (Mt 1:2);
- ✓ 2) male descendants of the same parents (Acts 7:23);
- ✓ 3) male children of the same mother (Gal 1:19);
- ✓ 4) people of the same nationality (Acts 3:17);
- ✓ 5) any man, a neighbor (Lk 10:29);
- ✓ 6) persons united by a common interest (Mt 5:47);
- ✓ 7) persons united by a common calling (Rev 22:9);
- ✓ 8) mankind (Mt 25:40);
- ✓ 9) the disciples (Mt 23:8); and
- ✓ 10) believers (Mt 23:8).

(From Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson, Publisher.)

## **Scriptural proof: who the “brothers and sisters” of Jesus were.**

**In the four gospels there are a total of four women listed as being at the foot of the cross of Jesus at Calvary:**

Mary, the mother of Jesus

Mary Magdalene, listed in all four gospels

Mary (the wife of Clopas), the mother of James (the younger), Joseph (Joses), and Salome

Joanne, the sister of Jesus' mother (Jesus' aunt) who was the mother of James and John, the sons' of Zebedee

### **Matthew 27:56**

Among them were Mary Magdalene and, Mary the mother of **James** and **Joseph** and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

### **Mark 15:40**

There were also women looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger **James** and of **Joses**, and **Salome**.

### **Luke 24:10**

The women were Mary Magdalene, **Joanna**, and Mary the mother of **James**; the others who accompanied them also told this to the apostles,

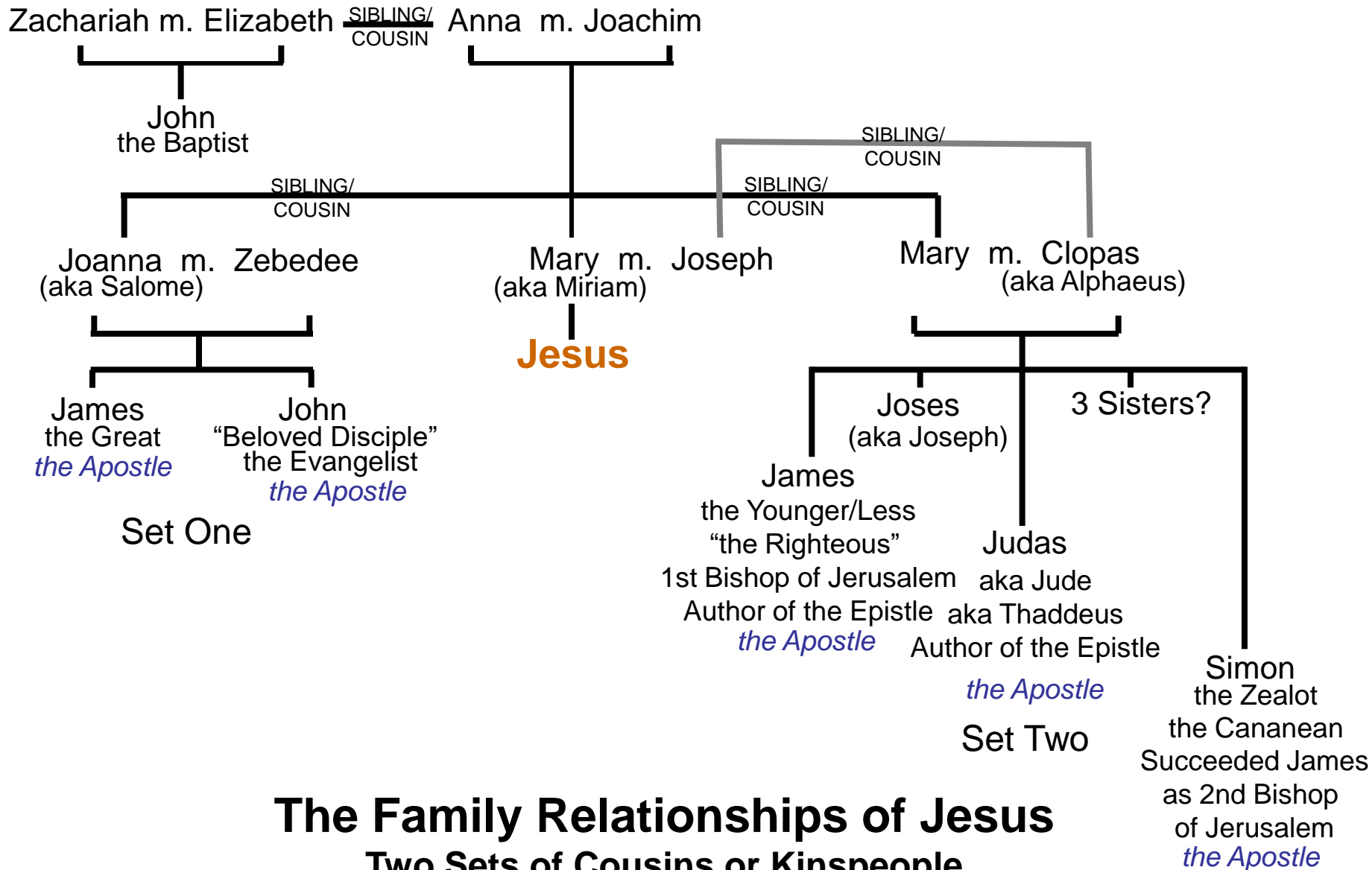
### **John 19:25**

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and **his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas**, and Mary of Magdala.

	THE MOTHER OF JESUS	MARY OF MAGDELA	SALOME/ JOANNA	MARY THE WIFE OF CLOPAS
MATTHEW		"Mary Magdalene"	"the mother of the sons of Zebedee"	"Mary the mother of <b>James</b> and <b>Joseph</b> "
MARK		"Mary Magdalene"	"Salome"	"Mary the mother of the younger <b>James</b> and of <b>Joses</b> "
LUKE		"Mary Magdalene"	"Joanna"	"Mary the mother of <b>James</b> "
JOHN	"his mother"	"Mary of Magdala"	"his mother's sister"	"Mary the wife of Clopas"

Breakdown of the text of the Four Gospels and the Calvary Narrative





# The Family Relationships of Jesus

## Two Sets of Cousins or Kinspeople

### Not Blood Brothers and Sisters



A **second objection** to Mary's virginity arises from the use of the word, *heos*, in Matthew's gospel.

### **Matthew 1:25**

He (Joseph) had no relations with her until (*heos*) she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Greek and the Semitic use of the word *heos* (until or before) does not imply anything about what happens after the time indicated. In this case, there is no necessary implication that Joseph and Mary had sexual contact or other children after Jesus.

A **third objection** to the perpetual virginity of Mary arises from the use of the word, *prototokos*, translated "first-born" in Luke's gospel.



### **Luke 2:7**

(Mary) gave birth to her firstborn son (*prototokos*). She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger ...

The Greek word *prototokos* is used of Christ as born of Mary and of Christ's relationship to His Father (Col 1:25). As the word does not imply other children of God the Father, neither does it imply other children of Mary. The term "first-born" was a legal term under the Mosaic Law (Ex 6:14) referring to the first male child born to Jewish parents regardless of any other children following or not. Hence when Jesus is called the "first-born" of Mary it does not mean that there were second or third-born children.

# The Protestant Reformers and the Virginity of Mary

**The Protestant Reformers** affirmed their belief that Mary, while remaining every-virgin, was truly the Mother of God.

**Martin Luther** (1483-1546)



It is an article of faith that Mary is Mother of the Lord and still a virgin. ... Christ, we believe, came forth from **a womb left perfectly intact**. (Weimer's *The Works of Luther*, English translation by Pelikan, Concordia, St. Louis, v. 11, pp. 319-320; v. 6. p. 510.)

This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favoured the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while **preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity**." (Weimer's, v. 7, p. 572)

1483-1546



## John Calvin (1509-1564)

### On the perpetual virginity of Mary

Calvin Routinely brushes aside the difficulties sometimes raised from "first born" and the "brothers of the Lord." (O'Carroll, M., 1983, *Theotokos*, Glazier, Inc.: Wilmington, DE, p. 94.)

[On Matt 1:25:] The inference he [Helvidius] drew from it was, that Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband . . . No just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words . . . as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called 'first-born'; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin . . . What took place afterwards the historian does not inform us . . . No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation.

(*Calvin's Commentaries*, tr. William Pringle, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949, p.215; on Matthew 13:55)

1509-1564





## Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)

I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and **after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin**. (*Zwingli Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Berlin, 1905, v. 1, p. 424.)

I esteem immensely the Mother of God, the ever chaste, immaculate Virgin Mary ...; Christ ... was **born of a most undefiled Virgin**." (Stakemeier, E. in *De Mariologia et Oecumenismo*, Balic, K., ed., Rome, 1962, p. 456)





## **John Wesley** (1703-1791) (Founder of Methodism)

I believe... he [Jesus Christ] was born of the blessed Virgin, who, as well after **as she brought him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin.**

("Letter to a Roman Catholic" quoted in A. C. Coulter, *John Wesley*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, 495)



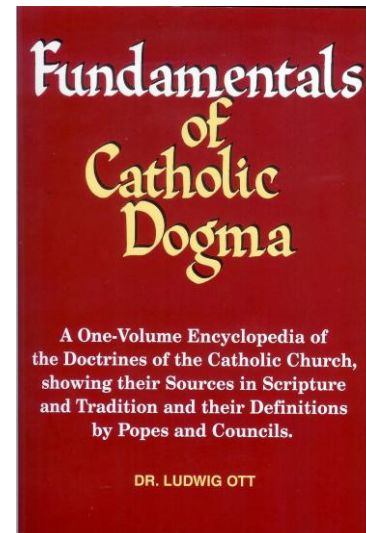


## Another issue remains: how was Mary's virginity continued *during* the birth of Jesus.

The dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity merely asserts **the fact** of the continuance of Mary's physical virginity ***without determining more closely how*** this is to be physiologically explained.

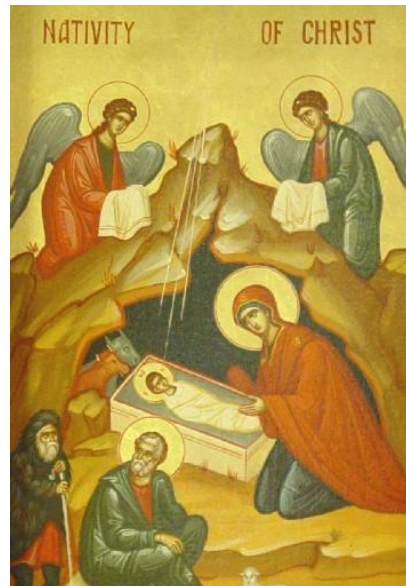
This may be paralleled to the belief of Jesus' resurrection. The Church attests to the **fact** of His resurrection without defining **how** the human body of Jesus was physiologically brought to life.

Ott, PhD, Ludwig, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*.  
TAN Publishers, Rockford. IL, p. 206



For the illustration of the mystery, the Fathers and Theologians employ various analogies--the emergence of Christ from the sealed tomb, His going through closed doors, the penetration of the ray of sun through glass, the birth of the Logos from the bosom of the Father, the going out of human thought from the human spirit. Christ's miraculous emergence from the unimpaired womb of the Virgin Mother finds its ultimate explanation in the Omnipotence of God.

**St. Augustine says “in such things the whole ground of the mystery is the might of Him who permits it to happen.” (Ep. 137, 2, 8)**



## **Did Mary suffer labor pains?**

This question reflects upon the Church's position that the how of the Virgin Birth occurred and details of that event are not revealed nor defined by the Church.

*Theological opinion* would reason that if Mary did not inherit the curse of Eve in Genesis 3:15 she probably did not suffer labor pains. Her Immaculate Conception declares that she did not inherit the consequences of the original sin of Adam and Eve nor consequences thereof.

*Devotionally speaking*, of all the pains Mary bore, the only painful effect that Jesus would directly have caused--her labor--would be one that Jesus could "most easily" have relieved. Simeon ( Luke 2:34-5) did prophesy that Mary's soul would be "pierced by a sword" whose seven sorrows are described by the Church. Labor pains, bearing Jesus' birth, is not one of the named sorrows.

*Medically speaking*, there are ample examples of women who experience no labor when giving birth.

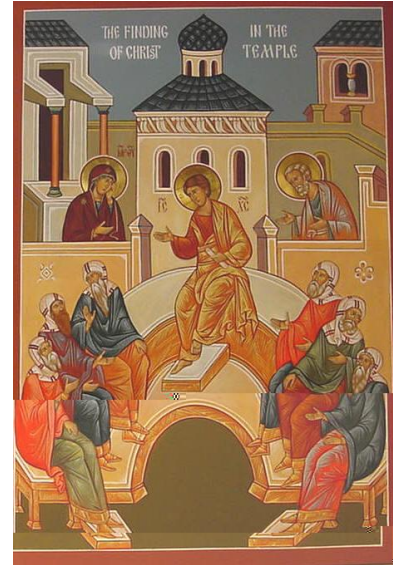
## Additional Insights and Comments



Had Mary borne other children and had a normal sexual life, then ordinary people would have had no surety that Jesus' birth occurred before Mary's being sexually active and therefore why believe the stuff about being "overshadowed by the Holy Spirit" for Jesus' conception and birth.

There is an appropriateness that the very womb that bore the Son of God become man should not bear another. The high probability of confusion with the origins, divine or otherwise, and the propagation of original sin to other children of Mary or siblings of Jesus would have persisted perhaps even to this day and fermented much confusion among believers.

Two New Testament narratives also raise the issue of Mary's perpetual virginity and the question of other children: (1) the loss of Jesus in the Temple when he was twelve years old, and (2) Jesus' command to His apostle John at the foot of the cross.



Had there been other siblings of Jesus when He was twelve and left behind in the Temple, might not some mention be made of them? There is not the slightest inkling of other brothers or sisters. It would seem humanly reasonable that mention would be made of them during the search for Jesus (only “they sought among their kinsfolk and acquaintances” [Luke 2:44]). Then when He is found and His parents leave to return for home Luke 2:51 says “and He went down with them and came to Nazareth.”



At His crucifixion on Calvary, Jesus gave His mother Mary to His apostle John's care. That would have been a gross injustice and insensitivity to other children--blood brothers and sisters--had they existed. Semitic custom would have dictated that to give His Mother's care outside the immediate family to have been highly unlikely. In effect what Jesus asked John to do was to be Mary's son after He died! How unusual is that had there been other sons?

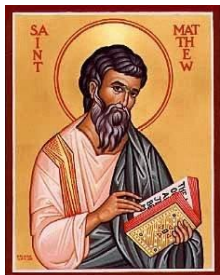


# Lifestyle vocations within the New Testament Church

Finally, it was Jesus Himself in His teachings and those of the apostle Paul that a balance was created in the importance to the roles of marriage and non marriage, to sex within marriage and sexual continence or celibacy/virginity within or without marriage. Jesus, the Evangelists and Paul would see the advantages of all states of life within the Church, not just marriage.

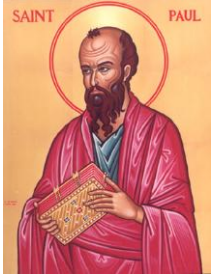
The primary example of celibacy/virginity is clearly the **lifestyle example of Jesus himself**. The practice is further sanctioned by the New Testament.

## Matthew 19:12



Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because **they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven**. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.

## 1 Corinthians 7:6-7



This I say by way of concession, however, not as a command. Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am (single? widowed?), but **each has a particular gift from God**, one of one kind and one of another.

## 1 Corinthians 7:25-26

Now in regard to virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. So this is what I think best because of the present distress: that **it is a good thing for a person to remain as he is**.

## 1 Corinthians 7:32-34

I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But **a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided**. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. **A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband**.

## Acknowledgements

Statements of dogma can be found in:

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