

RCIA CLASS 8B - THE MARIAN DOGMAS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

I. Mary as the Mother of God

- A. Jesus is the divine person, the Son of God, who has from all eternity a divine nature and took a human nature. Mary is the mother of this divine person through His human nature. The human nature cannot be separated from the divine Son of God.
- B. After a heated dispute this dogma was defined at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Elizabeth describes Mary as "the mother of my Lord." Luke 1:43. Although the term "Lord" could have more general meanings, that term as used by Luke and Elizabeth refers to God.
- C. In addition to clarifying who Jesus is, knowing that Mary is the Mother of God gives implications for her universal and exalted role in salvation history, especially as the Queen Mother and as the Mother of the Church, the body of Christ. All motherhood participates in Mary's perfect motherhood.
- D. In order to refute a heresy called Nestorianism, which said that Jesus is an entirely distinct person from the Son of God, the Council of Ephesus declared in 431 that Mary is the Mother of God. Pope Sixtus III approved of the Council as an ecumenical (universal and binding) council in 432.

II. Mary as Ever Virgin

- A. Mary was and is a virgin before, during and after the birth of Jesus. Although it was not a common practice, Mary probably took a vow of virginity at an early age.
- B. Mary asked the angel how she could bear a son, probably because she had taken this vow. See Luke 1:34. Scripture clearly says Mary was a virgin until the birth of Jesus. Matt. 1:25, Luke 2:7.
- The word "until" did not mean that the situation changed afterward. See, e.g., Gen. 28:15; Psalms 110:1; Matt 28:20 ("I will be with you always until the end of the age.")

C. The references to Jesus as the first born son of Mary does not imply that there were more sons. The "first born" was a title given regardless of whether there were other children. See Ex. 12:2; Lev. 18:15.

D. The references to Jesus' "brothers," see e.g., Mark 3:31-35, 6:3, 1 Cor. 9:5, do not imply Mary had other children. The Greek word used (adelphos) mean close relatives generally. See Gen. 13:8, 14:14; 29:15.

- The Gospel according to Matthew describes the mother of two of Jesus' brothers, James and Joseph, as "the other Mary." See Matt 13:55, 28:1.

- Some Catholic theologians, although a minority, argue that Joseph was a widower and had children by his previous marriage. See, e.g., Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book II, ch. 1.

E. Mary as ever virgin is the model for both the married and the single. There is a connection between the two vocations. She is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

F. Thus, the Church Fathers and councils have affirmed Mary as ever virgin.

1. St. Jerome, the patron saint of Scriptural scholars, wrote a treatise on The Perpetual Virginity of Mary.

2. The Second Council of Constantinople (554), an ecumenical (i.e. universal and binding) council of the Church referred to Mary twice as ever-virgin, although that was not the issue that the council was called to address.

3. The Lateran Synod of Rome (which was not an ecumenical council, but was still very prestigious) said in 649 that Mary was ever virgin, a phrase that is in a Eucharistic Prayer used at Mass at least from the 4th century to the present.

4. In the last chapter of Lumen Gentium, the Constitution on the Church, the Vatican II Council confirmed this teaching, referring to Mary as "ever Virgin." Lumen Gentium 52.

III. Mary as Immaculately Conceived

A Mary was conceived without original sin and remained sinless her entire life. That is why Gabriel called her "full of grace." As

the thirteenth century Franciscan theologian Blessed Duns Scotus explained, Jesus saved her by "preventative grace," which kept sin from her, rather than redeeming her from sin already incurred. In a similar way, it is a greater work for a doctor to prevent a sin than to cure it.

B. This belief rose first on the popular level, and then was debated by theologians. It was celebrated in a universal feast, starting in 1708. In 1854, after consulting the bishops of the Church, Pope Pius IX defined this dogma in Ineffabilis Deus.

C. Mary is the new Eve, conceived without original sin and, unlike the first Eve, remaining sinless. She draws us to her sinlessness by her example and our devotion to her.

IV. Mary as Assumed into Heaven

A. At the end of her earthly life, Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. Jesus ascended of His own power into heaven.

B. Part of the idea is that Mary as the new Eve would naturally be assumed. Jesus also wanted the Queen and Mother to be in heaven, body and soul with Him.

C. Psalms 45 and 132 refer to the Queen and the Ark of the Covenant being brought to the King and to God. In addition to their historical meaning, these images are prefigurements of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Thus, Revelations 13 refers to the opening of the new and final Ark of the Covenant in heaven and the woman clothed with the sun in the same breath. Both are images of Mary.

D. After requests from 113 cardinals, 1500 bishops, 82,000 priest and religious, and about 8 million laity, Pope Pius XII defined this dogma in 1950 in the encyclical Munificentissimus Deus.

D. This dogma both further indicates Mary's role as reigning as Queen and Mother in Heaven and gives a more profound sense of true feminism and the real destiny of the human body and human accomplishments, which are as St. Paul says like a seed to the tree of everlasting life. See 1 Cor. 15:42-44.

A. And so we venerate and call upon the Blessed Virgin Mary above all the angels and saints, as the Mother of Jesus and thus the

Mother of God and the Mother of the Church. Jesus performed His first miracle at her request and, being a good son, would want His people to give her honor. See John 2:1-11. The Book of Revelation presents "the woman clothed with the sun" who bears the Son and who is the mother of all the faithful. See Rev. 12:1-8. We identify this woman with both Mary and the Church, of whom she is the Mother. "By her motherly love she cares for her Son's brothers and sisters who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties. . . . She shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the people of God." Lumen Gentium 62, 69.