

St. Francis of Assisi Church Wakefield, RI **RCIA** Deacon Paul O. Iacono

## *Mary, Our Blessed Mother*

### **I. Mary's Personal History**

- A. Tradition tells us that Mary was the daughter of Joachim and Anne.
- B. She married Joseph, a respected Jewish carpenter from Nazareth.
- C. Little is known of Mary's life other than the references to her in the Gospels.
- D. She attended the wedding feast at Cana, was present at Jesus' crucifixion, and was with the Apostles at the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

### **II. Mary Prefigured in the Hebrew Scriptures**

“The most famous Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah are *Genesis* 3:15, *Isaiah* 7:14 and *Micah* 5:1-4. In all three prophecies the Mother of the Messiah plays a prominent part. Here we will study the prophecies in Isaiah and Micah. These are the prophecies in Isaiah and Micah: [let's refer to our modern translation in our *St. Joseph edition of the New American Bible*.]

"The Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." [*Isaiah* 7:10-14].

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace", Micah [5:2-4]." (This is taken from an excellent paper on Mary in Scripture: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/MARYINSC.htm>)

### III. Mary as Mother and Saint

- A. As the mother of Jesus, and the wife of Saint Joseph, Mary is *the greatest saint*.
- B. She is *the* model of faith, purity, and maternal devotion for all Christians.
- C. Mary is called the Blessed Virgin because she conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Saint Joseph is the foster father of Jesus. St. Joseph is **not** the biological father of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the spouse of Mary (this is part of the mystery of the Incarnation).

- D. Mary freely gave herself to God (**confer Chapter 1 in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew**), *with complete trust, responded to God's Will*. The Church teaches that Mary was conceived without sin. This is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception which we celebrate on December 8<sup>th</sup>.  
Mary, as Gabriel described is "full of grace" ... **"Hail Full of Grace / Rejoice Highly Favored One"**

"The angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary is of great consequence for our understanding of Mary and Marian doctrine. The greeting has been variously translated as "Rejoice highly favored" and "Hail full of grace." The object of the varied translations is the Greek word *kecharitomene* which refers to one who has been transformed by God's grace. The word is used only other time in the New Testament and that is in the epistle to the Ephesians where Paul is addressing those who by becoming Christians are transformed by grace and receive the remission of sins. It is clearly significant that Mary is considered to already have been transformed by grace before the birth of Christ. "

Origen (AD 185 -254)wrote: "Because the angel greeted Mary with new expressions, which I have never encountered elsewhere in the Scriptures, it is necessary to comment on this. I do not, in fact, recall having read in any other place in the Sacred Scriptures these words: Rejoice, O Full of Grace. neither of these expressions is ever addressed to a man: such a special greeting was reserved only for Mary." (This is also taken from "Mary in Scripture": <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/MARYINSC.htm>)

- E. The Church teaches that Mary was assumed into heaven *with body and soul united*. This is the dogma of the Assumption.

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#### IV. Some of the Titles of Mary

- A. Since 1964, Mary has been honored as the *Mother of the Church*. She is called The Mother of the Church because through her free choice she cooperated with God's plan to build a new "arc of salvation" (the Church) for His people.
- B. She is called the *New Eve* because just as the original Eve brought sin and death into the world, Mary, as the bearer of spiritual life, brought Jesus (the *New Adam*) into the world. This provided the opportunity for grace, redemption, and salvation to impact and transform mankind.
- C. In the year AD 431, at the Council of Ephesus (attended by over 200 bishops), Mary was named *Theotokos* (the *God Bearer*; the true mother of God) and a model of Christian living.
- D. The Catholic Church celebrated the *Annunciation* (Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would be the Mother of the Savior), the *Purification*, the *Assumption*, and the *Birthday of Mary* by the eighth century (700's). The *Immaculate Conception* became popular by the tenth century (900's).
- E. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint Louis de Montfort, Pope John Paul II and many other saints of the Church have written extensively on Mary and her role in the Church and in the lives of individuals.

#### V. Mary as Intercessor

- A. Roman Catholics **DO NOT** *worship* Mary.
- B. Roman Catholics, Greek and Russian Orthodox, and other Eastern rite Catholics pay respect and reverence to Mary but they do not worship her.
- C. **WORSHIP IS RESERVED FOR GOD ALONE.** These Churches are not in violation of the Ten Commandments.
- D. Mary *intercedes (pleads for mercy on behalf of the Church) before the throne of God in the same way* that a mother would intercede with the father on behalf of her children.