



Catechetical Series:

What Catholics Believe & Why

MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES

Behold The Truth

Discovering the What & Why of the Catholic Faith
beholdthetruth.com

While we find support for the teaching
Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces in Scripture and Tradition,
it is distinguished from the Church's other Marian teachings,
such as Mary, the Mother of God, Perpetual Virginity,
Immaculate Conception, and Assumption,
in that it has not been elevated to the level of a dogma,
the highest degree of magisterial teaching.



One Mediator Between God and Men

- ❖ Saint Paul calls Jesus the “one mediator between God and men” because He “gave himself as a ransom for all.”
1 Tim. 2:5, 6
- ❖ Because Jesus uniquely has a share in both the divine and human natures, because He alone is both God and man, His death on the Cross alone was able to reconcile us with the Creator.



One Mediator Between God and Men

- ❖ He required no assistance in effecting the Atonement.
- ❖ His Sacrifice on our behalf is in Itself perfect, complete, and wholly efficacious.



Our Lady's Fiat

- ❖ Yet God desired (out of love, not necessity) that salvation should enter into the world as sin had entered: through a woman.
- ❖ Thus, he asked the Virgin Mary to bear mankind's Savior and she freely assented, saying, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word."
Luke 1:38



Our Lady's Fiat

- ❖ This act of submission to God's will, known as Mary's *Fiat*, reveals the purity of her faith.
- ❖ The Gospels portray Mary as she who hears and keeps the word of God. Cf. Luke 1:45; 11:27-28
- ❖ Her obedience at the Annunciation remedied Eve's rebellion, opening the way for Our Savior to come to us.
- ❖ This gives Mary the distinction of being the only person to directly participate with Her Son in our redemption.



The Woman with the Redeemer

- ❖ Mary's unique role as *the Woman with the Redeemer* is spoken of in the opening chapters of the Bible when God says to the Serpent at the Fall of Man, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."
Gen. 3:15



The Woman with the Redeemer

- ❖ This Woman is Mary, the New Eve, who would intimately cooperate in the plan of redemption by bearing the Redeemer: He who would crush the Serpent.
- ❖ “But when the time had fully come,” wrote Saint Paul, “God sent forth his Son, born of a woman.” Gal. 4:4



Mary's Second Fiat

- ❖ Mary is identified as *the Woman* in the Gospel scene of the Wedding Feast at Cana, which reveals as well her inclination to go to Her Son on the behalf of others.
- ❖ When she goes to Jesus on behalf of the young couple and tells Him the wine has run out, He replies to her enigmatically, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” John 2:4



Mary's Second Fiat

- ❖ She, in turn, says humbly to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” John 2:5
- ❖ Remarkably, in spite of His apparent reluctance, the Lord proceeds to turn water into wine, His first public miracle and the sign that His ministry would indeed begin.



Mary's Second Fiat

- ❖ In anticipating going out into the world to fulfill His mission, the Lord awaited Mary's consent, just as He had before coming into the world at the Annunciation.
- ❖ This, of course, is not from necessity on God's part, but from His loving desire that His handmaid participate in the redemption of His children.
- ❖ For this reason, Mary's response to Jesus at Cana, her last spoken words in Scripture, has come to be regarded as her *Second Fiat*.



Mary's Share in the Paschal Mystery

- ❖ As the Mother of the Redeemer, Mary was given the privilege of intimately sharing in the joy of the Lord's birth, the agony of His death, and the glory of His Resurrection.
- ❖ At the Presentation in the Temple, Simeon reveals to her that Her Child will undergo suffering; and that “a sword” will pierce her own heart as well. Luke 2:34-35



Mary's Share in the Paschal Mystery

- ❖ This would come to pass 33 years later on Calvary as Jesus offered Himself to God on the Cross for the sins of the world; and Mary in her heart offered to God her maternity.



Mary's Share in the Paschal Mystery

- ❖ The Second Vatican Council taught: “Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son in the intensity of his suffering, joining herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim, born of her.” *Lumen Gentium* 58



Mary's Share in the Paschal Mystery

- ❖ Gazing down upon her from the Cross, the Savior uttered, “Woman, behold your son!”, referring to the Apostle John standing beside her; and to the Apostle, “Behold, your mother!” John 19:26-27
- ❖ In again referring to her as *the Woman*, Jesus reaffirmed her to be the one who would cooperate with Him in the defeat of Satan.

Mary's Share in the Paschal Mystery

- ❖ Is it not extraordinary, moreover, that Jesus commanded Mary first to look after John given that John was an adult fully capable of caring for himself?
- ❖ It is only reasonable to take this command as the entrustment of the Mother of the Redeemer with the spiritual care of John, and even more, with the spiritual care of the Lord's Mystical Body, the Church, represented by the beloved disciple.



The Woman in Revelation 12

- ❖ Years later Saint John would record a celestial vision of Mary in *Revelation*: “And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.” 12:1-2



The Woman in Revelation 12

- ❖ In this passage, *the Woman*, the Mother of the Church, stands in heavenly glory, yet suffering pain in anticipation of the birth of the redeemed, “the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus.”
12:17



The Woman in Revelation 12

- ❖ On the evening of His arrest, the Lord Jesus said, “When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now.” John 16:21-22
- ❖ Here the “child” to be born is the Church and the “woman in travail,” specifically, is Mary at the foot of the Cross.



Mary's Heavenly Intercession

- ❖ Having been assumed into heaven, Mary continues to cooperate with Her Son, serving as our foremost intercessor with Him.
- ❖ Her intercession on behalf of her children is foreshadowed in the Old-Testament story of Adonijah, who entreats Queen Bathsheba to speak for him to her son, King Solomon. “Pray ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you,” begs Adonijah. “Very well,” answers the Queen; “I will speak for you to the king.”



Mary's Heavenly Intercession

- ❖ As she enters the throne room, her son bows down to her (a provocative gesture for a king), and has a throne brought in for her and placed at his right side.
- ❖ “Then she said, I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me. And the king said to her, Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you.”
1 Kgs. 2:17-20



Mary's Heavenly Intercession

- ❖ It is almost as if we hear in this exchange between the King of Israel and the Queen Mother the hidden response of Jesus to Mary at the Wedding Feast at Cana.

Early Church Writings

- ❖ The early Christians regarded Mary as the New Eve, recognizing her unique call to cooperate with God in His plan of salvation.
- ❖ This teaching is found early in the second century in *The Letter to Diognetus*, which states, “Then Eve is not seduced, but a Virgin is found trustworthy.” 12:8

Early Church Writings

- ❖ Around the year 155, Saint Justin the Martyr writes, “[Jesus] became Man by the Virgin so that the course which was taken in the beginning through the agency of the serpent, might be also the very course by which it would be put down. For Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the power of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her is the Son of God. And she replied: ‘Be it done unto me according to thy word’ (Luke 1:38).” *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 100

Early Church Writings

- ❖ “Mary alone co-operat[ed] with the pre-arranged plan,” Saint Irenaeus remarks in about 185. And the Saint goes on to say that she “was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. ... Thus, the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. What the virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith.” *Against Heresies* 3:21:7; 3:22:4
- ❖ That the early faithful sought the Virgin’s intercession in prayer is evident as well. “Under your mercy we take refuge, O Mother of God,” says the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* in about 250. “Do not reject our supplications in necessity, but deliver us from danger, [O you] alone pure and alone blessed.”

Early Church Writings

- ❖ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem said around 350, “Death came through a virgin, Eve. It was necessary that life also should come through a virgin, so that, as the serpent deceived the former, so Gabriel might bring glad tidings to the latter.”
Catechetical Lectures 12:15
- ❖ Saint Theodotus of Ancyra wrote in 432, “In place of the virgin Eve, mediatrix of death, a virgin has been filled with God’s grace to be the minister of life.”
Homily on Holy Mary, Mother of God, and on the Holy Nativity of Christ 6:11

Early Church Writings

- ❖ In about 550, Saint Romanos the Melodist imagines Mary saying, “Cease you laments; I will make myself your advocate in my Son’s presence. Meanwhile, no more sadness, because I have brought joy to the world. ... Then curb your tears; accept me as your mediatrix in the presence of him who was born from me.”
Second Hymn on Christmas 2:10, 11
- ❖ Saint John Damascene writes in about 740, “From her we have harvested the grape of life; from her we have cultivated the seed of immortality. For our sake she became Mediatrix of all blessings; in her God became man, and man became God.” *Second Homily on the Dormition of Mary 16*

The Church in the Modern Era

- ❖ In 1894, Pope Leo XIII writes, “The recourse we have to Mary in prayer follows upon the office she continuously fills by the side of the throne of God as Mediatrix of divine grace, being by worthiness and by merit more acceptable to him, and for that reason surpassing in power all the angels and saints in heaven.” *Jucunda Semper*
- ❖ And Vatican II teaches, “By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cultics, until they are led into the happiness of their true home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator.” *Lumen Gentium* 62



Catechetical Series:

What Catholics Believe & Why

Produced by

Behold The Truth

Discovering the What & Why of the Catholic Faith

visit us at

beholdthetruth.com