

5. Mary, the Angels and Saints

Through Mary's faithful assent to cooperate in God's saving plan, she becomes truly the Mother of God. All Christians are her children, and we are to love and honour her.

Key terms:

Assumption:	The dogma that God took Mary into Heaven, body and soul at the end of her life.
Immaculate Conception:	The dogma that Mary was conceived free from original sin.
Mother of God:	The dogma that Mary is mother of Jesus, the Son of God, not just of his human nature.
Perpetual virginity:	The dogma that Mary was a virgin before, during and after the birth of Jesus, and for the rest of her life.
Corporeal:	Having to do with the body.
Material:	The physical created world.
Spirit:	1) The non-material reality of God, angels and the human soul; 2) a personal being without a material body but with an intellect (mind) and will.
Non-corporeal:	Without matter; angels are pure spirit – they do not have bodies.
Demons:	Angels who chose to reject God; fallen angels.
Satan:	The leader of the fallen angels.
Saint:	Saints are persons in heaven (officially canonized or not), who lived heroically virtuous lives, offered their life for others, or were martyred for the faith. Someone who is set apart for God's special purposes. In essence, every follower of Jesus Christ is a saint.
Beatification:	A recognition accorded by the Catholic Church of a deceased person's entrance into Heaven. They are the 'blessed'. This is the second of three stages in the process of canonisation.
Canonisation:	The official act of a Christian community declaring a person worthy of public veneration and entering their name in the canon of saints.

MARY

Mary is invited to become the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of the Son of God, the Mother of God.

- God the Father's incremental plan used the faith and obedient response of his creatures. (Gen. 15:1-16)
- The culmination of God's plan required Mary's free response of faith. (Lk. 1:38)

- Mary's vocation is made possible by the action of the Holy Spirit.
- As Jesus is the New Adam, so Mary's obedient response of faith makes her the New Eve.
- Mary is the new Ark of the Covenant, who carries within her the Lawgiver, not the Law, the Bread of Life, not manna, and the eternal High priest not the rod of Aaron.
- Since Mary is the Mother of Jesus, and because Jesus is truly God, Mary is the Mother of God. (Lk. 1:43)

Feast of Mary, Mother of God: 1st January

Immaculate Conception: Mary was conceived without original sin (Gen. 3:15)

- God promised that the Saviour would be born of a woman wholly at enmity with Satan.
- From the moment of her conception, God preserved Mary from personal sin for her entire life.
- The angel's greeting implicitly recognised Mary's freedom from sin – 'full of grace' (Lk. 1:28).
- Mary, too, needed a Saviour; she was preserved from sin by anticipation of the merits of her Son, receiving the graces of his redemptive acts at the moment of her conception.

(Ref. *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854. Pope Pius IX, pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary "in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.")

Feast of the Immaculate Conception – 8th December

Perpetual virginity: Mary is ever-virgin (Ez. 44:2; Mt. 1:18-25)

- Mary remained a virgin, before, during, and after the conception and birth of Jesus.
- Jesus' "brothers and sisters" are other close relations, as in the Gospels (Mt. 13:55, 27:56, 28:1).
- Mary's perpetual virginity flows from her acceptance of the divine will through the Holy Spirit's overshadowing her, an act that sanctified her womb.

(Ref. Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople, 553 AD declared Mary "ever-virgin". Pope Martin I one century later clarified that "ever virgin" meant Mary was a virgin before, during and after Christ's birth.)

Assumption: Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven (Rev. 12:1)

- After the end of her earthly life Mary was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory.
- Mary's assumption is participation in her Son's resurrection and anticipates our own.

(Ref. Pope Pius XII, in *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), defined that Mary, "after the completion of her earthly life was assumed body and soul into the glory of heaven.")

Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: 15th August

Mary is Mother of the Church and our spiritual Mother (Jn. 19:26-27; Rev. 12:17)

- At his death, Jesus gives her to us as our Mother in the person of the beloved disciple.
- Mary is our Mother in the order of grace and is our model for faith, obedience and holiness.

- She is the model of what the Church is called to become, spotless, without stain or blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).
- As Queen Mother, Mary participates in the mediation of her Son's grace, intercedes for us, and always leads us to her Son (Jn. 2:1-10) so we can pray to her.

Veneration of Mary

Christians do not 'worship' Mary. Only God is to be adored and worshipped, but because of Mary's closeness to God, the Church honours the Blessed Virgin Mary with special devotion (CCC 971). We pray to Mary, asking her to intercede for us with God.

Marian Apparitions

Marian apparitions are supernatural events in which the Blessed Virgin Mary is alleged to have appeared to one or more people. These appearances are often paired with a message Our Lady wants to communicate.

In 1879 the Blessed Virgin appeared at Knock, in County Mayo. Our Lady gave no verbal message and made no formal address.

Marian Prayers

The Rosary, The Magnificat, Memorare, Hail Mary, Hail, Holy Queen, The Angelus

THE ANGELS AND THE SAINTS

Angels serve God

- The action of angels is found throughout the Old and New Testaments:
 - Messengers and servants of God and his Son, Jesus (Mt. 4:5-6, 11)
 - Protectors of God's human creatures (Ps. 91:11)
 - Proclaimers of Jesus' Incarnation and his Resurrection (Lk. 1:26-38; Lk. 2:8-15; Mt. 28:1-7)
 - Angels adore, praise, and glorify God (Rev. 7:11-12)
- The Church in union with the angels worship God.
- Angels protect, guide and pray for us here in earth, helping to fulfil the Father's plan for each soul.

The nature of angels (Dan. 10:2-21)

- Angels are spiritual, non-corporeal beings made in God's image.
- They have intelligence and will.
- They are personal and immortal.
- They do not procreate; they are each their own "species".

- They do not develop or mature; they are complete at the moment of their creation, when each one decided for or against God.
- In Heaven, we will be like angels in our dignity before God, but we will remain human, in perfect union with the human and divine natures of the Son of God (Lk. 20:36; 1Pt. 1:1-4; 1Jn. 3:2).

Satan and Demons (Rev. 12:1-10)

- Angels who rejected God are the fallen angels or demons (Lk. 10:18)
- As eternal beings, they cannot repent of their choice, due to the perfection of angelic knowledge – they saw everything perfectly when they chose – they have no more reason to repent now than at their creation.
- Jesus came to destroy the power and works of Satan (1Jn. 3:8)
- The Holy Spirit is given to us to cast out the works of Satan in our own soul and that of the world (Mk. 16:15-20)
- Satan’s power is limited and can never gain final victory over the Son of Man (Mk. 3:11-15)

Saints

- A saint is “a person who, after having lived a life of virtue, dies in the state of grace and has been granted the reward of eternal life by God.”
- We are all called to be saints.
- The saints in heaven unceasingly intercede for those on earth.
- The saints serve as models and inspiration to us.
- Since 993AD the Church has officially and solemnly declared some deceased members of the faithful to be saints.
- The Feast of All Saints is celebrated on 1st November every year. Halloween is celebrated on the day before All Saints – on 31st October.
- Saints’ names are regularly chosen at Baptism and Confirmation.

Mary, the Angels and Saints— Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Who do Catholics honour Mary? Why is she considered the Mother of the Church?
2. Why is Mary’s Assumption into Heaven a source of hope for Christians?
3. Jesus gave Mary to us as our Mother. How can Mary’s example and her faith, help us in our own daily lives?
4. How have angels worked to carry out God’s plan of salvation?
5. How do we know angels exist?

6. How can we cooperate with our Guardian angels to help us follow the way of Christ?
7. What does the role of Mary in God's plan of salvation say about the dignity of women?
8. In what way does God use His saints to draw us deeper into the Christian life?
9. Why should every Christian aspire to become a saint?

PRAYER

Pray together Mary's Magnificat

Pray the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. (*See end of notes*)

or

Gospel Reflection: Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A Mt. 25:1-13

Year B Mk. 12:38-44

Year C Lk. 20:27-38

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

MARY

Scripture

Gn. 3:15	God promises a saviour, born of “the woman”, who will conquer Satan.
1Sm. 1:1-2,11	Hannah prays for a child, devotes him to God, and sings a canticle of joy to God.
2Sm. 6:14-15	David dances before the Ark of the Covenant.
1Kgs. 2:19	King Solomon’s mother intercedes on behalf of Adonijah’s petition.
Is. 7:10-14	God will give a sign to the king: the virgin birth of a child called Emmanuel.
Ez. 44:2	The eastern gate of the sanctuary may not be opened, for God has entered by it.
Mt. 1:18-25	Jesus is conceived of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.
Lk. 1:26-38	Gabriel tells Mary, a virgin, of God’s plan for her to conceive the Son of God as her Son, and Mary freely and humbly gives her consent.
Lk. 1:39-55	Mary visits Elizabeth, whose son John leaps in his mother’s womb when Mary greets her; Mary sings a canticles of joy and gratitude to God.
Jn. 2:1-11	At a wedding feast, Mary intercedes on behalf of the married couple.
Jn. 19:26-27	Jesus gives the beloved disciples to Mary as her son and him to Mary as his mother.
Rom. 5:19	Jesus is the New Adam who undid the disobedience of the first Adam.
1Cor. 15:21-22	As Adam brought death, so Jesus as the New Adam brings life.
Gal. 4:4-5	The Son, born of a woman, was sent that we might be God’s adopted children.
Rv. 11:19-12:17	The Ark of the Covenant is seen; a woman clothed with the sun appears, pregnant with a child who will rule the world; threatened by Satan, she is protected by God; Satan wars on her other children, the faithful followers of Jesus.

Catechism

148-149, 273	Mary is the most perfect example of the obedience of faith and our model in faith.
411	Mary is the New Eve.
484-507	Jesus’ divine conception, Mary’s divine maternity and her privileges.
721-726	Mary, full of grace, fulfils God’s plan and, through the Holy Spirit, makes God visible, brings us to her Son, and is the new Eve, the mother of all Christians.
963-972	Mary, as Mother of God, is Mother of the Church, an icon of the Church, and our own Mother to whom we give honour and devotion.
2673-2679	We pray with, and to Mary, our Mother, especially in the Hail Mary, the Rosary, and numerous hymns and prayers.

ANGELS

Scripture

Gn. 3:1-15	Satan, a fallen angel tempts our first parents to sin and is punished.
Gn. 19:1-22	Angels save Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
Gn. 22:1-18	An angel prevents Abraham from slaying his son Isaac.
1Kgs 19:3-8	An angel gives Elijah food for the journey from Beer-sheba to Horeb.
Tb. 11:12-15	The archangel Raphael reveals his mission and identity to Tobit and his son Tobias.

Mt. 4:1-1	The Devil tempted Christ, and the angels ministered to him.
Mt. 18:10	In Heaven, our guardian angels always see God's face.
Mt 25:31	The angels will be with Christ when he comes again in glory.
Mt. 28:1-7	An angel proclaimed Jesus' resurrection to the women at the tomb.
Lk. 1:5-20	The archangel Gabriel announces the conception of John the Baptist to his father.
Lk. 1:26-38	The archangel Gabriel announces the conception of Jesus to the Virgin Mary.
Lk. 2:1-14	Angels herald the birth of Jesus.
Lk. 20:36	In Heaven, human beings will be equal to angels as sons of God.
Jn. 8:44	The Devil is a murderer, a liar, and the father of lies.
Heb. 1:14	Angels are servants of Christ for the sake of those who are to be saved.
1 Pt. 5:6-9	Satan seeks to destroy those faithful to God.
2. Pt. 2:4	When the angels sinned, God threw them into Hell.
Rev. 7:11-12	The angels worship and praise God in Heaven.
Rev. 12:7-9	The archangel Michael and his angels defeated the Devil and his followers.

Catechism

- 328-330 Angels are spiritual, non-corporeal, immortal beings, with intelligence and will, created by God to act as his messengers and serve him in other ways.
- 331-333 Angels have existed since creation and serve throughout the story of salvation from the closure of Eden to the Second Coming of Christ.
- 334-336 In her Liturgy, the Church joins with the angels in worship; they in turn, help, protect, pray for, and guide us.
- 391-393 The angels make a permanent choice for or against God at their creation; those who rejected God are the fallen angels, also called demons, who are led by Satan.
- 394-395 Satan tempted our first parents to disobey God and, in a mystery of divine providence, he and his demons are permitted by God to act in the world and the human heart against God; their power, however is limited.

(Source: RCIA Catechist's Manual, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Maryland, 2007)

SAINTS

Scripture

- Jer 15:1 Long after their deaths, Moses and Samuel are depicted pleading for the Israelite people on earth.
- Prov. 2:8 That he may guard the paths of justice, and preserve the way of his saints.
- Ps. 16:3 As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.
- Ps. 30:4 sing praise to the Lord, you saints of his. Give thanks to his holy name.
- Ps. 50:5 Gather my saints together in me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
- Ps. 97:10 You who love the Lord, hate evil. He preserves the souls of his saints. He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.
- Ps. 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.
- Jn. 15 "I am the vine, and you are the branches.
- Rev. 8:3 The prayers of the saints rise up before God and then God acts on earth.

- Rev. 8:4 The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.
- Rev. 5:8 Now when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
- Rev. 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; those who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
- Heb. 12:1 The saints are a "cloud of witnesses".
- Rom. 8:27 He who searches the hearts knows what is on the Spirit's mind, because he makes intercession for the saints according to God.

Catechism

- 828 The saints are proposed as models of heroic virtue and intercessors.
- 961-962 They are a communion of "holy persons" (*sancti*) in Christ.
- 955-956 United to Christ, the saints intercede between God and men.
- 954 The Three States of the Church: Militant, Penitent, Triumphant
- 946 In the creed, we confess the 'communion of saints – what is the Church if not the assembly of all the saints?
- 2156 The sacrament of Baptism sanctifies the baptised and the Christian received their name in the Church. Taking a saint's name, a disciple in the faith provides a model of charity and the assurance of their intercession.
- 2030 Through the sacraments the Christian fulfils their vocation. They learn recognise in the saints and the Virgin Mary the model and source of holiness.
- 1717 The Beatitudes shed light on the actions and attitudes of the Christian life reflected in the example of Virgin Mary and the saints.
- 2684 The variety of charisms within the lives of the saints are essential guides for the faithful.
- 2683 The saints are the witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, and they intercede for us and the whole world.

Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Lord, have mercy on us. *Christ, have mercy on us.*

Lord, have mercy on us. *Christ hear us. Christ, graciously hear us.*

God the Father of heaven, *Have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *Have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Spirit, *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, one God, *Have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, *Pray for us.* (repeat after each line)

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,

Mother of Christ,

Mother of the Church,

Mother of mercy,

Mother of divine grace,

Mother of hope,

Mother most pure,

Mother most chaste,

Mother inviolate,

Mother undefiled,

Mother most amiable,

Mother most admirable,

Mother of good counsel,

Mother of our Creator,

Mother of our Savior,

Virgin most prudent,

Virgin most venerable,

Virgin most renowned,

Virgin most powerful,

Virgin most merciful,

Virgin most faithful,

Mirror of justice,

Seat of wisdom,

Cause of our joy,

Spiritual vessel,

Vessel of honour,

Singular vessel of devotion,

Mystical rose,

Tower of David,

Tower of ivory,

House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the sick,
Refuge of sinners,
Comfort of Migrants,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
Queen of Angels,
Queen of Patriarchs,
Queen of Prophets,
Queen of Apostles,
Queen of Martyrs,
Queen of Confessors,
Queen of Virgins,
Queen of all Saints,
Queen conceived without original sin,
Queen assumed into heaven,
Queen of the most holy Rosary,
Queen of Families,
Queen of Peace,

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord.*

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us.*

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray, Grant, we beseech you, Lord God, that we your servants may rejoice in continual health of mind and body and, by the glorious intercession of Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, may we be delivered from present sorrow to delight in joy eternal. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.