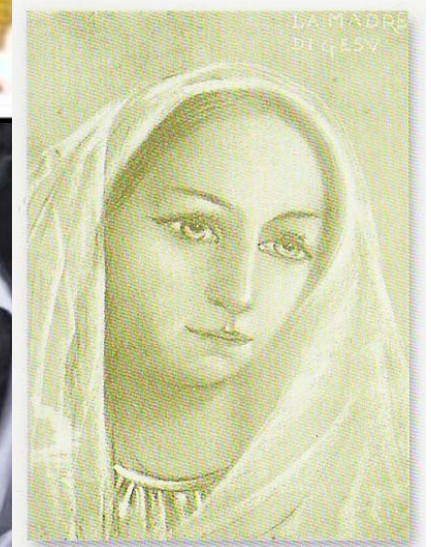
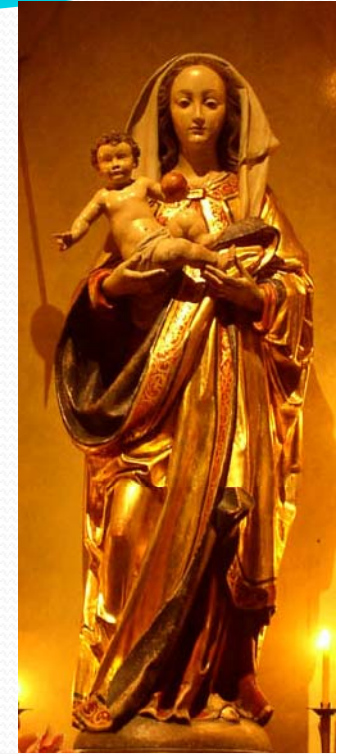


Images of Mary



Sharing our perspectives



Back to the sources:

What the Scriptures say

Overview

- Paul and Mark: Woman and Mother
- Matthew: Woman of Faith
- Luke: Virgin Mother, First Disciple
- John: Woman and Mother

Images of Mary through the centuries 1-3: New Eve

- The heroes of the first three centuries of the Church were the martyrs. Those who had, like Christ, died in witness of their faith.
- During this time the image of Mary as the new Eve became popular through the preaching of St Justin Martyr , St Irenaeus, Tertullian.
- Reflecting on Paul's letter to the Romans where Christ is portrayed as the new Adam, repairing the damage cause by the sin of the first Adam, they saw Mary as the new Eve:



Images of Mary through the centuries 1-3: New Eve

EVE

- Mother of all the living
- Listens to the devil
- Brought death into world through her disobedience to God's word
- Is thrown out of paradise

MARY

- Mother of all the redeemed
- Listens to the Angel
- Brings Life into the world through her obedience to God's word
- Enters the kingdom of her Son

Ave Stella Maris

(Based on the writing of St Irenaeus)

Ave to the crying, Gabriel went before us;
Peace do thou restore us, Eva's knot untying.

Images of Mary through the centuries 3: Model of the Virgin

- Following his conversion to Christianity the Roman Emperor Constantine issued the Decree of Milan in 313 which allowed Christians to freely practice their religion.
- When the threat of martyrdom from external sources receded, Christian consciousness turned to the internal martyrdom of the ascetical life.
- Heaven was no longer won by the shredding of one's blood for Christ, but by living a disciplined and ascetical life.



Images of Mary through the centuries 3: Model of the Virgin

- This is the age of the Desert Fathers. Flight from the world and its concerns in order to concern oneself with the interior world.
- There was a cosmic war between the physical and the spiritual. The physical (body) had to be restrained, dealt with harshly (punished?) in order not to distract from the spiritual quest.
- The first forms of monasticism begin to appear.
- This gave rise to an very idealised image of Mary as a model of maidenhood & virginity.



Images of Mary through the centuries 3-4: Model of the Virgin

The Proverbs of the Council of Nicea (AD. 325), 'Mary never saw the face of a strange man, that was why she was confused when she heard the voice of the angel Gabriel. She did not eat to feed her body, but she ate because of the necessity of her nature. She withdrew all by herself into her house, being served by her own mother. She sat always with her face turned towards the East, because she prayed continually. Her brothers wanted to see her and speak to her. And she did not receive them. She slept only according to the need of sleep. When she put on a garment she used to shut her eyes. She did not know many things of this life, because she remained far from the company of women. If therefore, a girl wants to be called a virgin, she should resemble Mary.'

Images of Mary through the centuries 5-13: Our Lady, Queen

- In Medieval times, the image of Mary shifted again. This is a time dominated by the great courts of Europe and the age of chivalry, kings, knights and queens.
- Paralleling ‘the lady of the place’ (my lady) Mary became the ‘lady of the Christians’ – hence the title “Our Lady”.
- Knights lived by a strict moral code. They were ‘consecrated’ to a particular way of life involving honour, integrity, courage and courtesy, especially towards women.



Images of Mary through the centuries 5-13: Our Lady, Queen

- Knights always fought on behalf of their lady to win her favour.
- The most perfect and fairest of all ladies was Mary, the Virgin Queen of heaven and earth.
- Minstrels sang of her beauty, poets extolled her virtues.
- “Our Queen has gone before us; she has been so gloriously received in heaven that we, her pages, can follow with confidence in the footsteps of our Lady”.
(St Bernard)

Images of Mary through the centuries 14-15: Loving Mother

- The Renaissance saw a flourishing of the visual arts and an exaltation of nature and the human condition.
- The human and the human spirit were glorified.
- The image of Mary as a loving mother dominates Renaissance painting almost completely.
- The warm, tender mother, often portrayed with one breast exposed, is caring for her, often naked, infant child. Both are well nourished, rosy-cheeked and happy.
- She lavishes the same loving care on her spiritual children.



Images of Mary through the centuries 16-17: The Cult of Mary

- Confidence in Mary's powerful intercession as Our Lady and our protector grew exponentially throughout the 16th and 17th centuries – to the point when Mary was seen as granting favours through her own power.
- An extraordinary number of titles, feasts, devotions and paraphernalia developed: rosaries, scapulars, devotion to Mary's wounds, coronets, medals, emblems, etc.
- Almost every religious order made a specific claim on Mary either by title or by apparition.



Images of Mary through the centuries 16-17: The Cult of Mary

- Luther complains in the 16th century that popular Marian piety has ‘put that noble child, the mother Mary, right into the place of Christ. They fashioned Christ into a judge and thus devised a tyrant for anguished consciences, so that all comfort and confidence was transferred from Christ to Mary’.
- This trend was to dominate the Church for the next three centuries.



Images of Mary through the centuries 18-20: The Cult of Mary

- Great advances in science, engineering, human accomplishment; growth of rationalism, enlightenment, materialism, revolution against monarch and ruling classes.
- As the image of Christ as 'just judge' and Christ the King grew Mary assumes the role of mother of mercy. She holds back Jesus' punishing arm.
- Christ was stern and strictly just in his judgements on the world, but poor sinners still had hope by turning to Mary who could smuggle them into heaven, hidden in the folds of her all-embracing mantle.

Images of Mary through the centuries 18-20: The Cult of Mary

- Though Mary is Queen, she is still mother and acts like a mother by interceding for her children.
- As Jesus becomes more inaccessible, Mary becomes more indispensable as the only path: To Jesus through Mary.
- Eventually this would also become: from Jesus through Mary, and in its more extreme form – from Jesus with Mary.

Images of Mary

in the golden age 1854-1950

- The Cult of Mary continues to grow into the 'golden age' between 1854 and 1950.
- 1854 definition of Immaculate Conception
- 1858 apparitions at Lourdes (Immaculate Conception)
- The definition further removes Mary from human experience. She is now 'the sinless one' a title previously ascribed to Christ (Isaiah 53:9; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:15).
- 1917 apparitions at Fatima: repentance, prayer, penance, conversion of Russia, consecration to Immaculate Heart, unite against the forces of evil.

Images of Mary

in the golden age 1854-1950

- 1921 Feast of Holy Family as model of family life introduced to counteract divorce and lax morals
- Titles like *Advocate*, *Mediatrice of all Graces*
- Leo XIII spoke of her as having "practically limitless power."
- St. Pius X said she was the "dispensatrix of all the gifts, and is the "neck" connecting the Head of the Mystical Body to the Members.
- All power flows through the neck. Pius XII said "Her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion."



Images of Mary

in the golden age 1854-1950

- 1950 definition of the Assumption
- Novenas, Statue Processions, Scapular enrolments, medals, Rosaries, pictures of Immaculate Heart and Sacred Heart etc commonly found in Catholic life.
- Image of Immaculate Conception dominates – note that Mary is standing on the snake – a reference back to the New Eve image.
- Privileges of Mary seen in close parallel to the attributes of Christ.



Images of Mary

Vatican II +

- Council's teaching on Mary is placed within the Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)
 - not on its own.
- 'One who occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and also the closest to us.' (LG)
- Call for good theological reflection which refrains from excesses and avoids the banal.



Images of Mary

Vatican II +

- Marialis Cultus written by Paul VI 1974 – for the right ordering and development of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- “Mary is held up as an example to the faithful for the way in which in her own particular life she fully and responsibly accepted the word of God and did it....She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and most perfect of Christ’s disciples.” – Paul VI

Images of Mary

Vatican II +

- Mother of the Church – Paul VI (John’s Gospel)
- Woman of Faith (Matthew)
- First Disciple of her Son (Luke)
- Stronger reliance on the Scriptural image of Mary
- Lessening of more ‘romantic’ images & titles
- Theotokos – “God bearer”
- Pattern of the true disciple: listening to the Word of God; doing the Word of God; bringing forth the Word of God; making God present to the world.

Mary in the life of the Church

Today

- Why did it all change?
- Recovery of the humanity of Christ and
- changes in image of Christ
- A richer, more scriptural, less romantic theology emerged
- Changes to the Liturgy