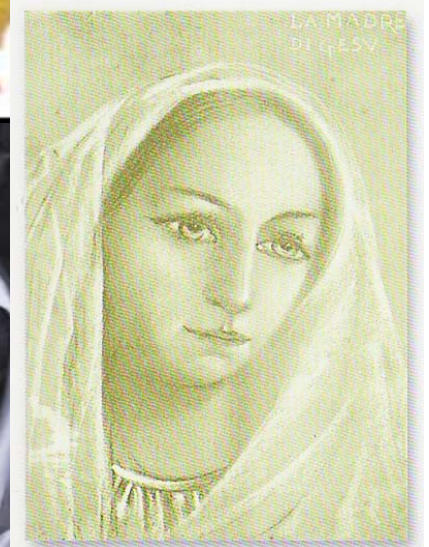
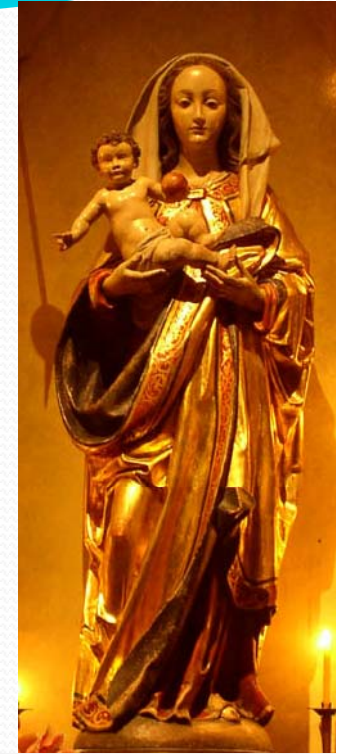


Mary in the New Testament Scriptures



Sharing our perspectives



Back to the sources:

What the Scriptures say

A few things to remember when we read the Scriptures

- Paul is writing about the year 55AD
- Mark's Gospel was written about the year 70AD
- Matthew & Luke's Gospels were written about 85AD
- John's Gospel was written about the year 100AD
- The Gospels represent various traditions and communities of faith rather than a total account of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Back to the sources:

What the Scriptures say

- Mark is writing for members of his own community of Jewish converts in Rome.
- Since Matthew contains about 80% of Mark, he is probably the author of a *gospel tradition* rather than the author of the text as we have it.
- Luke certainly wrote both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.
- John's Gospel arises from the *traditions* of the community of disciples of the Beloved Disciple. One person seems clearly responsible for its structure.

Back to the sources:

What the Scriptures say

- Mark's Gospel is written for Mark's own community of Jewish converts in Rome to deepen their faith.
- Matthew's Gospel is written for a group of mainly Jewish converts and shows Jesus as the Messiah
- John's Gospel was written for circulation among the Johannine Christians (or Churches which relocated possibly to Ephesus following their expulsion).
- Luke/Acts is primarily addressed to a Gentile audience, many of whom are well-to-do and who are in a hostile situation.

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

Back to the sources:

What the Scriptures say

Important background

Blood lines & family lines

- In Judaism the bloodline (Jewishness) is communicated through the *mother* not the father
- Family lines (belonging to this particular Jewish family) are communicated through the *father*

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Paul

- Earliest mention of Mary in the Scriptures is in St Paul's letter to the Galatians, written about the year 55AD. Chapter 4, verse 4:

When the appointed time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law and to enable us to be adopted as sons.

Back to the sources:

What the Scriptures say: Mark

- Mary is mentioned on two occasions in Mark
- One of Mark's perspectives is that Jesus creates a new family of God (3:7-6:6a)
- After the institution of The Twelve Jesus meets opposition from his own family (3:19b-21):

He went home again, and once more such a crowd gathered that they could not even have a meal. When his relatives heard of this, they set out to take charge of him, convinced he was out of his mind....

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Mark

....His mother and brothers now arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. A crowd was sitting round him at the time the message was passed to him, 'Your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you'. He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking round at those sitting in a circle about him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.' (3:31-35)

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Mark

At the close of the same section, Mary is mentioned by name (6:1-6a).

Going from that district, he went to his home town and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him and these miracles that are worked through him?'

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Mark

The people ask all the right questions, but they come to the wrong conclusion. They fail to understand the origin and source of Jesus' power because they believe they already know his origins:

This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us? And they would not accept him.

For Mark, it is not enough to know the identity of Jesus' mother or his brothers and sisters.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Mark

The new family of God goes beyond the limits of human history and natural bonds of family and nation. It is not enough to know the blood relatives, one must know Jesus as the Son of God.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Paul/Mark

These passages from Paul and Mark do not indicate any profound reflection on the role of Mary, but from them some all-important facts are established:

- Jesus was born of a woman
- He had a mother
- Her name was Mary

This is the beginning of the new testament reflection on Mary which presents her as woman and mother.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Matthew

- Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy of Jesus.
- It's a typical first-century genealogy
- It briefly incorporates the whole Old Testament thought and history into the Gospel as a background to Jesus through reference to the heroes of the past.
- In effect it says, 'If you want to know and understand Jesus Christ then read the Old Testament'.
- It is not absolutely historical; some people are left out.
- Fathers are the important people for belonging to family

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Matthew

- Matthew's intention is to convey the fact that, looking back, we can see that God has been in charge of a 'sacred history' from Abraham to Jesus.
- Matthew constructs a genealogy with three groups of twelve generations.
- 3 is the biblical number for perfection
- 12 is the biblical number for DAVID
- David was regarded as the iconic king of Israel
- Therefore the perfect David is Jesus Christ

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Matthew

- Oddly, five women are mentioned: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba (Uriah's wife) and Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- Each one of these five women conceive in unusual circumstances, in irregular sexual unions.
- Each of these women coincide with major turning points in Israel's history.
- Each plays a significant role in the plan of God with courage and resourcefulness.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Matthew

- Through these women the house of Jacob and the line of David continues.
- Matthew sees them as integral to God's plan.
- Mary, also, is in unusual circumstances (Mt 18b-19)

His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally.....

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Matthew

- Normal age of betrothal for girls in first century was twelve and a half.
- Betrothal carried with it the right to cohabit.
- Joseph was probably about 14.
- Though the mothers carried the bloodline, the fathers carried the family line.
- Unless the father acknowledges the child it does not become part of the family.
- So what happens next is.....

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Matthew

Joseph had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, SON OF DAVID, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. (1:20)

- Joseph gives his name to Jesus by accepting Mary.
- Matthew presents Mary as the woman of faith who lays herself open to God's plan in spite of the difficulties, unusualness and scandal it involved for her.
- Mary is the final & perfect instrument in God's plan.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- In Luke's 'Infancy Narrative' (Lk 1-2) Mary is a predominant figure: annunciation, visitation, birth of Jesus, presentation in the Temple, finding Jesus in the Temple.
- Mary appears twice during Jesus' public ministry (18:19-21; 11:27-28)
- And again at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:14)
- For Luke Mary is Virgin Mother and First Disciple

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- Luke's infancy narrative is actually two infancy narratives
- One about John the Baptist and the other about Jesus
- A sense of wonderment and joy pervade the texts.
- There are three songs of thanksgiving known by their Latin names:
- Mary's Magnificat – My soul magnifies the Lord;
- Zachariah's Benedictus - Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- Simeon's Nunc Dimittis - "Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine" etc. ("Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord" etc.).
- The birth of both Jesus and John are graphic in detail and colour.
- The birth of Jesus especially so: shepherds, angels in abundance – all praising and glorifying God.
- Mary is the central figure in the whole narrative.
- The bridge between the two narratives is made in the Visitation.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

John the Baptist

- Annunciation to Zechariah
- Visitation
- Birth
- Circumcision in Temple
- Benedictus
- Hidden life

Jesus

- Annunciation to Mary
- Visitation (Magnificat)
- Birth
- Circumcision
- Presentation in Temple
- Nunc dimittis
- Hidden life
- Jesus in Temple with doctors
- Hidden life in Nazareth

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

What does the text say about Mary?

As we read through the text we notice two things:

1. Mary's response to the Annunciation has three stages:
 - Emotional: Disturbed, puzzled & astonished at greeting
 - Rational: 'How can this be?'
 - Faith: Trust & acceptance, 'Let it be done', even though she does not understand how this will happen and runs the risk of misunderstanding, scandal and rejection from her own family and Joseph.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- Caught up in the mystery of a God who does the impossible and not yet understanding how everything will unfold, Mary offers a whole-hearted YES.
- Mary hears the word of God and does it which, according to Luke, is the measure of the true disciple:

*His mother and his brothers came looking for him, but they could not get to him because of the crowd. He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you'. But he said, 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it'.
(Lk 8:19-21)*

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

Now as he was speaking, a woman in the crowd raise her voice and said, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked!' But he said, 'No; blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!' (11:27-28)

According to Luke, Mary is not blessed because she bore Jesus, but because she heard the word of God and kept it.

Reflecting on these passages it is Saint Augustine who names Mary as the first disciple.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- The final reference to Mary in Luke occurs in Acts 1:14 right in between the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit:

... they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- Notice that Mary is the only other person named along with the disciples; the other women and Jesus' brothers are not named.
- Mary is there at the beginning of the Church, with the disciples, praying as they await the gift of the Spirit.
- Naming Mary and giving her the title 'the mother of Jesus' suggests Mary's special position in the earliest community of her Son's disciples.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

2. She treasured all these things in her heart (2:19, 51)
 - On a number of occasions in Luke Gospel Mary is confronted with things she does not fully understand.
 - Mary, along with the others present, are astonished at the things the shepherds say at the birth of Jesus. They do not understand, but Mary treasures them in her heart (19)
 - Mary and Joseph marvel at the things Simeon says about Jesus at the Presentation in the Temple (33)

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- Mary and Joseph do not understand Jesus' reply when they find him in the Temple (50)
- Mary stored up all these things in her heart (51)
- The mystery into which God has invited Mary, Mary takes into her own heart. She moves from *chronos* to *kairos* – to living in God's time as she waits for the mystery to unfold. Mary's initial YES has to be repeated again and again without ever fully understanding the mystery. It is a journey of patient waiting, treasuring and contemplating and is not without pain – she will experience the sword piercing her soul.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: Luke

- When confronted with the mystery of God, one can marvel and walk away, or one can marvel and take it into one's heart, the deepest recesses of one's being, treasuring and pondering the mystery, ever alert to how it is continuously unfolding. Puzzlement, anxiety and pain often accompany the journey.
- Mary MacKillop is a good example. She senses God's call. She has no idea how it will unfold or where the journey will take her. Misunderstanding, pain and sorrow accompany her, but she meets it all with quiet trust and a refusal to retaliate against those who act so badly towards her.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: John

- In John's Gospel the mother of Jesus is never called 'Mary'. She is either 'woman' or 'the mother of Jesus'.
- Mary appears only in two scenes: the wedding feast at Cana, at the beginning of the Gospel (2:1-11) and at the foot of the cross near the end of the Gospel (19:25-27) .
- They have no wine. *What concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come. Do whatever he tells you.*

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: John

- The Wedding Feast and the Woman of Faith 2:1-12
- They have no wine. *What concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come. Do whatever he tells you.*
- What is ‘my hour’? Mary is there at beginning as woman & mother and again when the hour comes
- Mary’s comment to the servants shows her belief in Jesus. In John’s Gospel Mary is the first to show faith. The disciples also come to believe, but not until verse 11.
- In John Jesus is the Word of God. Mary tells the servants to do the Word of God – sound familiar?

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: John

- At the cross – woman and mother of the Church
- Mary is there at the end, when the ‘hour’ has come.
- John, the Beloved disciple is also there.
- Jesus transforms the relationship between his mother and himself at Cana into the relationship between his mother and the disciple at the cross.
- Note the language: *Woman* this is your *son*; here is your *mother*. The mother of Jesus becomes the mother of the disciple.

Back to the sources

What the Scriptures say: John

- Mary, the embodiment of faith and John, the embodiment of love are given to each other.
- For John, this is the moment the church is founded, and founded on faith and love.
- From that moment the disciple took her into his own home.
- The only other use of 'own home' in John's Gospel is in the Prologue: *He came to his own home and his own people did not accept him.* In Jesus' new home, his own now accept him. Mary is 'mother' in that home (Mother of the Church – Paul VI)