Mariology is the study of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and of her role in Salvation History. Mary is viewed by Catholics as having a unique dignity among saints. Due to her maternal relationship to Christ and to the fact that she was conceived without original sin, Catholics believe Mary is entitled to Hyperdulia, that is an extraordinary level of veneration, as opposed to Dulia, a Greek term for the honor given to other saints.

The field of Mariology includes dogmatic and theological studies of Mary, and also the study of the veneration of Mary in popular piety, including prayer, art, liturgy, hymns, shrines, and other devotions. The tradition of devotions associated with Catholic devotion to Mary are so extensive they require many more pages to expound. This page covers only the following topics as they relate to the Blessed Virgin Mary: 1) Dogmatic and Doctrinal teachings 2) Teachings and Writings of Saints 3) Pronouncements of Popes and Councils

Dogmatic Teachings Concerning Mary

There are four Marian teachings that have defined as De Fide Definita doctrines, or solemnly pronounced dogmas of the Faith. The Catholic Church teaches many truths about Mary, derived from the scriptures and traditions of the early Church, but only these four doctrines are considered dogmatic teaching.

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<td>Mary is Mother of Jesus who is truly God and Man in one person. — Council of Ephesus (431)</td>
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The doctrines “Mother of God” and “Perpetual Virginity” were recognized in ancient times. The other two (Immaculate Conception, Assumption) are consistent with the writings of saints over many centuries, but were elevated to ‘De Fide Credenda’ Dogma in recent times.

"Mother of God" and the Nestorian Controversy

During the 5th century Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, promoted a theory that Christ had two distinct natures, one human and one divine and that Mary was the mother of his human nature, but not the mother of his divine nature. This was a difficult issue, since the orthodox position recognized the dual nature of Christ but insisted that they were combined into a single, indivisible person. The Council of Ephesus was called in 431 to resolve the matter, and at that time the doctrine of the 'Hypostatic Union', was promulgated, in order to define and clarify the manner in which Christ’s two natures were combined.

The theology of Christ's dual nature as God and Divine influenced how Christians viewed Mary. The issue debated at the Council of Ephesus was whether Mary should be referred to as Theotokos or Christotokos. Theotokos means "God-bearer" or "Mother of God". Its use implies that Jesus is truly God and man in one person, which reflects the Orthodox understanding of Christ's nature. The Nestorians preferred Christotokos, meaning "Christ-bearer" or "Mother of
the Messiah" because they believed that God the Son existed before time and before Mary so calling her "Mother of God" was potentially heretical. The majority at the council agreed with the Pope that denying Mary the title Theotokos would imply that Jesus was two persons, one of whom was son of Mary and the other not. The decision to refer to Mary as Theotokos, therefore, established the dogma that Mary should be venerated as the 'Mother of God'.

Protestants and Marian Dogmas

Almost all Protestant sects accept the theology of the Council of Ephesus so they acknowledge that Mary is properly recognized as the "Mother of God". The Protestant position on the Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, and Assumption into Heaven, however, varies among denominations. Some, such as Anglicans, accept Catholic positions on most matters, or at least do not deny them. Protestant sects relying exclusively on Biblical interpretation, however, generally deny the Perpetual Virginity of Mary and the Immaculate Conception based on scriptural references (given below), and deny the assumption because it is not referred to directly in scriptures.

- "All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God." (Romans 3:23)
- "If any man says he has no sin he is a liar and the truth is not in him." (1 John 1:18)
- "My spirit rejoices in God my savior." (Luke 1:47, spoken by Mary)
- "Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?" (Matthew 13:55)

Teachings and Writings of the Saints

Most important doctrines regarding Mary that are not attributable directly to Scriptures were established fairly early by fathers and doctors of the Church. The following list of Saints writings on Mary are based in Wikipedia's Mariology of the Saints and other public domain sources.

Church Fathers and Saints of the Middle Ages

- Irenaeus of Lyons (140-202) — Irenaeus of Lyons, was the first Church Fathers to develop a thorough Mariology. Irenaeus shows that Christ was the "New Adam", and the Virgin Mary could be considered the "New Eve".
- Ambrose of Milan (339–397) — Ambrose wrote on the virginity of Mary and her role as Mother of God. He portrayed the Mother of God "as devoid off any defect or imperfection, with exceptional greatness and holiness" and defended the doctrine of perpetual virginity. He argued in De Institutione Virginis that if Mary had additional children, Jesus would not have entrusted his mother to John.
- Augustine of Hippo (354–430) — Augustine died before the Council of Ephesus declared Mary to be the Mother of God, but his writings on the nature of Christ underscored both the full humanity and full divinity of Christ. He also emphasized Mary's "Holy Virginity", and explained that Mary, like the Church, is both virgin and mother.
- Cyril of Alexandria (412–444) — Cyril presided over the Council of Ephesus at which Mary was declared "Theotokos" (God bearer) and the Mother of God. Cyril believed that Nestorius' preference for the term "Christotokos" (Messiah-bearer) undermined the idea that Christ nature was fully divine, equal to the Father in Glory and Majesty.
- **John Damascene** (675–676) — The Nestorian sect that split from the Church in the 5th century over the "Theotokos/Christokos" issue was still prominent in the East two centuries later. John Damascene wrote several important treatises critiquing the errors of the Nestorians. He also opposed the iconoclast heresy which resulted in the destruction and suppression of great works of art. Since Mary was a primary subject of art from early times, the destruction of Marian artwork severely affect cults committed to veneration of the Blessed virgin.

- **Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) was one of the influential churchmen of his time. In the "Sermon on the Sunday in the Octave of the Assumption" he described Mary's participation in redemption. He also wrote a treatise on Mariology under the title of *Our Lady, Star of the Sea*. "When the storms of temptation burst upon you, . . . look at the star, call upon Mary. . . ."

- **Saint Dominic** (1170-1221) — A legend holds that Dominic received the Rosary from in a vision of Mary. The canonization Acts of Saint Dominic emphasize his frequent praying of the hymn Ave Maris Stella. Nevertheless, the Rosary remains an important part of the charism of the Dominican order.

- **Anthony of Padua** (1195–1231) — The many sermons of Anthony of Padua on the Virgin Mary reflect his belief in Marian doctrines, including the Immaculate conception and the Assumption. His views greatly influenced the Mariology of the Franciscan order for centuries after his death.

- **Duns Scotus** (1266-1308) Duns Scotus dealt with the major objection to Mary's sinlessness from conception, her need for redemption. He took that position that the divine act of making Mary sinless from the moment of conception was the most perfect form of redemption possible.

- **Catherine of Siena** (1347-1380) is known for her example of devotion to Mary rather than her theological contributions. She began almost all of her letters with, "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified and of gentle Mary". She adopted the custom of dedicating Saturday to Mary and promoted the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**Post-Reformation Saints and Doctors**

In the years leading up to the Reformation and thereafter many saints and theologians continued to promote the doctrines of the Assumption and Immaculate Conception. Many also emphasized Mary's unique role as an intercessor and promoted popular devotions. This was a necessary reaction to Protestant criticisms of Marian veneration.

- **Peter Canisius** (1521–1597) — The Dutch Jesuit provided a classical defense of Catholic Mariology against Protestantism critics. He promoted Mary's role as an intercessor and defended popular piety. He wrote three catechisms, in which he affirmed the virtues of Marian piety, and he is credited with adding the sentence 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners' to the Hail Mary.

- **Robert Bellarmine** (1542-1621) — The Jesuit scholar prayed the Rosary and Little Office daily, and wrote in support of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption.
**Francisco Suarez** (1548-1617) — This Jesuit theologian, one of the leading scholars associated with the Council of Trent, was the first scholastic to apply Thomistic methods to Mariology.

**Francis de Sales** (1567-1622) — In *Introduction to the Devout Life*, de Sale' recommended devotion to Mary, especially entrusting oneself to her maternal heart. In *The Treatise on the Love of God*, he argued that Mary was preserved from original sin at the moment of her conception.

**Jean Eudes** (1601–1680) — Eudes introduced the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and established the Society of the Heart of the Mother Most Admirable. The feast of the Holy Heart of Mary was celebrated for the first time in 1648. The Mass and Office proper to these feasts were composed by Saint Jean Eudes in 1668.

**Louis de Montfort** (1673–1716) — Montort defended Mariology against Jansenism; his *True Devotion to Mary* synthesized many of the writings of earlier saints. Montfort's approach of "total consecration to Jesus Christ through Mary" had a strong impact on Marian devotion in both popular piety and religious institutes. He also wrote *The Secret of the Rosary*.

**Alphonsus Liguori** (1696-1787) — Ligouri integrated the ideas of Augustine, Ambrose and other fathers in a manner appealing to 18th century intellect. He argued in favor of the doctrine of Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven, and treated Mary as the "Gate to Heaven" in his Marian writings: *The Glories of Mary* and *Hail Holy Queen: An Explanation of the Salve Regina*.

**Encyclicals and Papal Pronouncements related to Mary**

**Middle Ages to Vatican II**

**Cum Praeexcelsa**, a bull by Sixtus IV, issued 28 February 1476, when plague was ravaging the country, established a Mass and Office for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

**Consueverunt Romani Pontifices** is a papal bull by Pope Pius V issued on 17 September 1569 on the rosary. This papal bull instituted the essence of the rosary's present configuration.

**Dominici gregis** — This papal bull was issued by Pope Clement VIII on 3 February 1603. It considered Marian piety the basis for Church and condemned a number of issues as errors, including the denial of the virginity of Mary.

**Ineffabilis Deus** — In this bull Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The decree was promulgated on 8 December 1854, the date of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

**Supremi apostolatus officio**, issued September 1883, was the first of Pope Leo XIII's many encyclicals on the Rosary. Others included "Superiore anno" (1884), and Octobri Mense (1891), discussed the prayer and efficacy of the Rosary.

**Ad diem illum** — This encyclical by Pope Pius X on the Immaculate Conception, was given on 2 February 1904, in the first year of his Pontificate. It was issued in
commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It is an important document because it explains the Mariology of Pope Pius X.

- **Auspicia quaedam** — This encyclical published by Pius XII in May 1948 requested worldwide public prayers to the Virgin Mary for world peace and for the solution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

- **Munificentissimus Deus (Most Bountiful God)** — This Apostolic constitution, issued by Pope Pius XII on 1 November 1950 promulgated the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

- **Ingruentium malorum** — This encyclical of Pope Pius XII, given on the Feast of the Seven Sorrows in 1951, entrusted to the Mother of God the destiny of the human family and recommended that Catholic families should pray the rosary together.

- **Fulgens corona** — This encyclical by Pope Pius XII proclaimed a Marian year for 1954, to commemorate the centenary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

- **Ad Caeli Reginam** — This encyclical issued by Pope Pius XII, on the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1954 established the feast of the Queenship of Mary.

**After Vatican II**

Chapter 8 of the Vatican II document **Lumen Gentium** (Light of the Nations) was dedicated the "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church" It was, however, controversial due to the "Non Ecumenical" nature of Marian devotion. From Wikipedia:

"The chapter on Mary was the subject of debate. Original plans had called for a separate document about the role of Mary, keeping the document on the Church "ecumenical," in the sense of "non-offensive" to Protestant Christians, who viewed special veneration of Mary with suspicion. . . . The council spoke of Mary as "Mediatrix," as strengthening — not lessening — confidence in Christ as the one essential Mediator. The council, in speaking of Mary, used a biblical approach, with strong emphasis on her 'pilgrimage of faith'. They also drew heavily from the Fathers of the Church, which Christians of all denominations respect."

- **Marialis Cultus** — Pope Paul VI issued this letter subtitled, "For the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary". The document does not focus on specific themes in Mariology, but clarifies the way the Roman Catholic Church celebrates liturgies that commemorate Mary.

- **Redemptoris Mater** — Pope John Paul II delivered this encyclical, subtitled "On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church" in 1987. It discusses the special place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the plan of salvation confirms the title, "Mother of the Church", proclaimed previously by Pope Paul VI.

- **Rosarium Virginis Mariae** — This Apostolic Letter by Pope John Paul II was issued on 16 October 2002. It is most significant for introducing the "Luminous Mysteries" to the Rosary.