

Mary: honored, not worshiped

What Catholics actually believe about the mother of Jesus.

In short. Adoration is due to God alone.¹ The Church honors Mary with a special devotion that, in its own words, “differs essentially from the adoration which is given to the incarnate Word and equally to the Father and the Holy Spirit.”²

Key points

- Adoration belongs to God alone; sacred images receive respectful veneration, not adoration.^{3,1}
- Devotion to Mary differs essentially from adoration.²
- Mary is called Mother of God because her Son is the Father’s eternal Son.⁴
- Christ is the one Mediator; Mary’s role shows the power of his mediation.^{5,6}

Try this, this week

1. **Read Luke 1:26–56.** Notice who calls Mary blessed, and why.
2. **Read John 2:1–11.** Listen to what Mary tells the servants.
3. **Compare the Hail Mary with Luke 1:28 and 1:42.** Its first lines come from those verses.
4. **Ask a Catholic friend what Mary means to them.** Listen first.

“Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

Luke 1:48, Douay–Rheims

Watch out: what this does not mean

- Mary is not divine: the Church teaches that no creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer.⁵
- Mary does not save apart from Christ: her influence depends entirely on his mediation and draws all its power from it.⁵
- Devotion to Mary does not replace the worship of God: the Church says it greatly fosters that adoration.²

Common questions

Did Mary have other children? What about the “brothers of Jesus”?

The Church confesses Mary’s real and perpetual virginity and celebrates her as “Ever-virgin.”⁷ It has always understood the passages about the brothers and sisters of Jesus as not referring to other children of Mary, but to close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.⁸

Where does the Hail Mary (Ave Maria) come from?

The Catechism explains that the Hail Mary opens with the greeting of the angel Gabriel.^{9,10} Its next words are Elizabeth’s greeting: “Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”^{9,11}

Remember: Everything Mary does points to her Son.

Sources

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|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. CCC 2132 | 7. CCC 499 |
| 2. CCC 971 | 8. CCC 500 |
| 3. CCC 2096 | 9. CCC 2676 |
| 4. CCC 495 | 10. Luke 1:28 (Douay–Rheims) |
| 5. CCC 970 | 11. Luke 1:42 (Douay–Rheims) |
| 6. 1 Timothy 2:5 (Douay–Rheims) | |

Quotation above: Luke 1:48, Douay–Rheims. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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