

WEEK ONE:

Mother of Jesus; Mother of God

We look at how the few biblical references to Mary have developed into a variety of beliefs and expressions of belief in the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox churches. We are introduced to Margarita Romo, another ordinary woman called by God to do extraordinary things.

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 1:26-38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."



SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 19:23-27



²³When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.” This was to fulfill what the scripture says, “They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.” ²⁵And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

SCRIPTURE READING: REVELATION 12:1-6

¹A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was pregnant and was crying out in birthpangs, in the agony of giving birth. ³Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. ⁵And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; ⁶and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days.



WEEK ONE: REFLECTION

The earliest biblical account of Mary is in the epistle to the Galatians, which was written before the four gospels. There, she is referred to as “a woman” and is not named: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4).

The gospels of Matthew and Luke recognize her as being named “Mariam,” translated into English as “Mary,” a woman chosen by God to conceive Jesus through the Holy Spirit when she was formally engaged to a man named Joseph, who married her and raised Jesus as his son. The Gospel of John refers to the mother of Jesus twice, but never mentions her by name. The Gospel of Mark names her once and mentions her one other time without naming her.

The Gospels say that, after giving birth to Jesus in Bethlehem, Mary raised him in the city of Nazareth in Galilee; she was in Jerusalem at his crucifixion and, according to the book of Acts, she remained with the apostles after his ascension. Many people say that the description in the book of Revelation of a “woman clothed with the sun” is an allegorical presentation of Mary.

Mary has a prominent place in Roman Catholic teachings and beliefs. There are theological doctrines and teachings that relate to Mary; church festivals, churches, and shrines dedicated to her, many of which attract large numbers of pilgrims.

Most Protestant Christians think the term “immaculate conception” refers to the birth of Jesus; in fact, it refers to the Roman Catholic doctrine that Mary was born without the burden of “original sin.” Orthodox and Catholic Christians also believe that she remained a virgin even after Jesus was born. Her death is not recorded in the Bible, but Orthodox and Catholic traditions hold that, after dying a natural death, her physical body was taken to heaven, an event known as her “assumption.”

Martin Luther, who in trying to reform the Roman Catholic Church caused and inspired the Protestant Reformation, had opinions about Mary that changed over time. Although he held the belief that she was “devoid of all evil,” he came to reject the practice of offering prayers to Mary and other saints as “idolatry.”

While most Protestants would say that Mary should only be honored as an outstanding example of a life dedicated to God, some within the Church of England and the Episcopal Church hold onto Roman Catholic practices and beliefs.



Recommended Hymns:

ELW 251: [My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness](#)

ELW 263: [Savior of the Nations, Come](#)

ELW 265: [The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came](#)

ELW 573: [My Soul Now Magnifies the Lord](#)

ELW 882: [My Soul Does Magnify the Lord](#)

ACS 906: [No Wind at the Window](#)

ACS 907: [Filled with Hope and Gratitude](#)

ACS 1096: [Joyful is the Dark](#)

Other Hymns and Songs:

[“The Annunciation”](#) and [“The Magnificat”](#) from Holden Evening Prayer

[“Breath of Heaven”](#) by Amy Grant and Chris Eaton

WEEK ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Does Mary’s example inspire you or intimidate you?
- Do you think it was easy for Mary to say “Yes” to God?
- Have you ever felt God calling you to do something difficult?

INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA ROMO



Margarita Romo is an activist for immigrant farmworkers in Florida. She was inducted into the Florida Civil Rights Hall of Fame in 2013. [Learn more about her here.](#)