

The Perpetual Virginity of Mary

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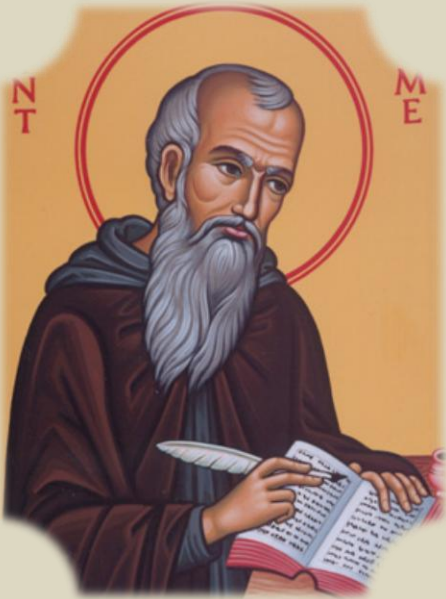
All Christians agree with the Virgin birth of Jesus through Mary. But not all Christians hold the belief that Mary was a perpetual virgin.

Catholics believe that Mary was a perpetual virgin, which means that she bore Jesus while still a virgin and remained a virgin the remainder of her life. However, many Protestants have the view that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus but she did not remain in that state. They often believe that she had other children besides Jesus.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

499 The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it." And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as *Aeiparthenos*, the "Ever-virgin".

Saint Jerome

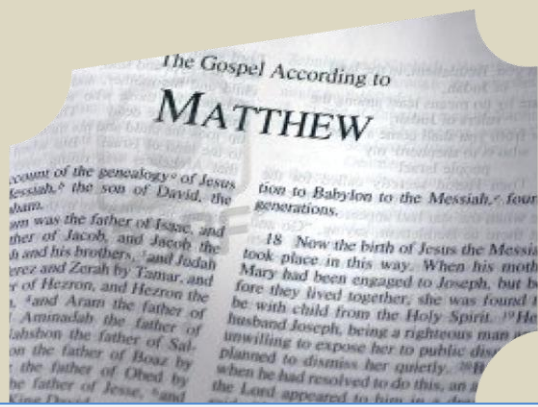


The first person to challenge the Perpetual Virginity of Mary was a man by the name of Helvidius who believed that Mary had several children.

In AD 383 Helvidius was in Rome teaching his new doctrine. Saint Jerome responded to Helvidius in a letter. Here is an excerpt from that letter:

"I was requested by certain of the brethren not long ago to reply to a pamphlet written by one Helvidius. I have deferred doing so, not because it is a difficult matter to maintain the truth and refute an ignorant boor who has scarce known the first glimmer of learning, but because I was afraid my reply might make him appear worth defeating.....I must call upon the Holy Spirit to express His meaning by my mouth and defend the virginity of the Blessed Mary. I must call upon the Lord Jesus to guard the sacred lodging of the womb in which He abode for ten months from all suspicion of sexual intercourse. And I must also entreat God the Father to show that the mother of His Son, who was a mother before she was a bride, continued a Virgin after her son was born".

You can read Jerome's entire letter by clicking [HERE](#)



The denial of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary comes from the teaching of what is known as Sola Scriptura or "Scripture Alone" and the idea of interpreting scripture apart from the Apostolic Tradition of the Church. With the coming of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century the idea that anyone can interpret the scriptures and come to the truth became one of the pillars of Protestantism. Just like Helvidius, Protestants rely on their own interpretation apart from the mind of the Church.

Did Mary have other children?

Protestant Objection: The bible clearly states that Mary had other children in Mark 6:3.

"Is he (Jesus) not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of **James** and **Joses** and **Judas** and **Simon**? And are not his sisters here with us?"

Catholic Answer: When Jesus was found in the temple at age twelve the context suggests that he was the only son of Mary and Joseph. Also Jesus grew up in Nazareth and the people of Nazareth refer to him as "the son of Mary" (Mark 6:3), not as "a son of Mary." Another point is that at the foot of the cross Jesus entrusted His mother to the apostle John. That would violate Jewish custom if Jesus had four blood brothers who could take care of her.

Protestants claim that James the apostle, the Bishop of Jerusalem, is the brother of Jesus because Galatians 1:18 says that Paul went to Jerusalem and "I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother." Is James the apostle his blood brother or simply a relative?

In Matthew 10:24 Matthew gives us the list of the apostles and he says, "The names of the apostles are these....James the son of Zebedee.....and James the son of Alphaeus." Notice it does not say "James the son of Joseph." This proves that James the "Lord's brother" can only be a relative.

In John 19:25 we read, "Standing by the foot of the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary of Magdalene." Cross reference this with Matthew 27:56: "Among them [at the cross] were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, (Joses) and the mother of the sons of Zebedee." It does not say Mary the mother of James, Joseph (Joses) and Jesus. This clearly is another Mary.

The bible is silent on Jesus' "brother" Simon and the epistle of Jude says, "I Jude a servant of Jesus Christ"

Another interesting fact! In John 19:25 it reads, "But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother (**Mary**) and his mother's sister **Mary** the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene."

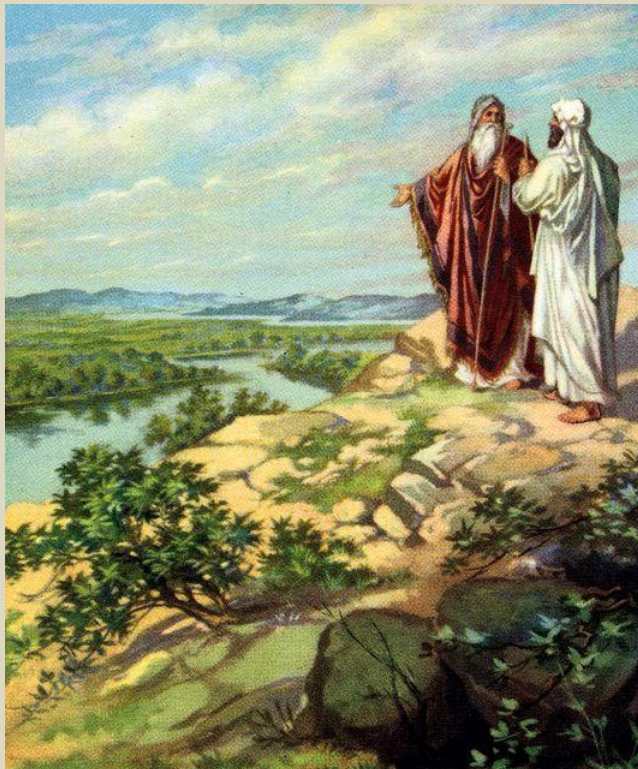
According to scripture Mary's sister was also named Mary! It would be odd that Mary's parents named both daughters "Mary" That alone proves the Catholic point. The word "brother" and "sister" can also simply mean a relative like a cousin and not always a blood relative.

Adelphos

The term 'brother' (in Greek: adelphos) as used in Scripture has many meanings. It does not only mean a full brother or half-brother. It can also mean cousin or another relative. When the New Testament speaks of the 'brothers' of Jesus it is using the Greek word 'adelphos.'

We can see as an example in the Old Testament, the term 'brother' could refer to any relative from whom you are not descended and who is not descended from you; this could include full brothers, half brothers, cousins, members of your family by marriage of law rather than by blood, and sometimes even friends and allies.

Abraham and Lot



As an example, Lot is called Abraham's 'brother' in the King James Bible in Genesis 14:14-16.

"And when Abraham heard that his brother (Lot) was taken captive, he armed his trained servants...and he brought back all the goods and also brought again his brother Lot."

Lot is the son of Haran, Abraham's brother (Gen. 11:26-28) and so he was actually Abraham's nephew.

Similarly, Jacob is called the "brother" of his uncle Laban (Gen. 29:15).

2 Sam. 1:26 – David calls Jonathon his brother, but David was son of Jesse and Jonathon was son of Saul

Catechism 508 From among the descendants of Eve, God chose the Virgin Mary to be the mother of his Son. "Full of grace", Mary is "the most excellent fruit of redemption" from the first instant of her conception, she was totally preserved from the stain of original sin and she remained pure from all personal sin throughout her life.

Joseph knew her not UNTIL

Protestant Objection: The Gospel of Matthew 1:25 clearly states that Mary had sexual relations with Joseph after the birth of Jesus. "Joseph took his wife but he knew her not until she had borne a son."

Catholic Answer: Matthew's point is to prove that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. He is not addressing what happened after the birth of Jesus. In the Bible, the word 'until' means only that some action did not happen up to a certain point; it does not imply that the action did happen later, which is the modern sense of the term. In fact, if the modern sense is forced on the Bible, some ridiculous meanings result.

Consider these uses of 'until'

2 Samuel 6:23 "Michal the daughter of Saul had no children until the day of her death"
Are we to assume she had children *after* her death?

1 Timothy 4:13: " Until I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching."

Does this mean Timothy should stop teaching after Paul comes?

1 Corinthians 15:25: "For he (Christ) must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet."
Does this mean Christ's reign will end?

Protestant Objection: For Mary to be a married virgin would be unnatural.

Catholic Answer: There is a tradition in the early Church that Mary was a consecrated virgin. One Jewish sect at the time of Jesus, the Essenes, did make vows of life-long virginity. That would make sense of Mary's response to the angel Gabriel.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would conceive a son, she asked, "How can this be since I have no relations with a man?" (Luke 1:34).

At this point with Joseph, Mary was married to him but the marriage had not yet been consummated per the Jewish custom of the wife and husband separating for several months after the wedding so the husband could prepare the household.

This statement of Mary's is curious because Mary knew how a child was conceived. If she had planned to one day have relations with Joseph (or any man for that matter), why would she say to the angel, "how can this be?"

With an angel telling you that you shall conceive a child, it seems that most people would take this statement to mean that once you consummated your marriage with your husband, the two of you would have a child. This would not be such a surprising prophecy. So why does Mary then ask the angel 'how can this be'? The answer may well be that she was a consecrated virgin and Joseph was to be her protector.

Saint Joseph



Another point that must be considered was the fact that Joseph being a pious Jew would not have broken the law.

According to the Jewish law given in Deuteronomy 24, if a man was betrothed to a woman and she became pregnant from another, he could never have relations with her. If he does it is an “abomination” before the Lord. The man had to put her away privately or condemn her in public and put her to death. Joseph chose the more merciful option.

We need to look at this from Joseph’s perspective.

An angel tells Joseph that Mary is pregnant by someone else, the Holy Spirit, and that he should take Mary as his wife. He follows the advice of the angel and takes Mary as his wife.

Does he ever have sexual relations with her? No. Because in his Jewish mind Mary was impregnated by someone else, the Holy Spirit, and in order to follow Deut 24:4, Joseph “ may not take her again” because that would be an “abomination”.

We can see something similar in 2 Sam 20:3. “When King David came to his palace in Jerusalem, he took the ten concubines whom he had left behind to take care of the palace and placed them in confinement. He provided for them, but had no further relations with them. And so they remained in confinement until the day of their death, lifelong widows.”

The ten concubines had been David’s when he was king, but then when his son overthrew him and took over the throne, his son then took the concubines. When David regained the throne, he also took back the concubines. However, now that his son had been with them, they belonged to his deceased son, so David could not by law have sexual relations with them, though he could care for them.

Joseph was to take care of Mary but not have sexual relations with her because Mary was the spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Next topic: The Third and Fourth Marian Dogmas, the Assumption of Mary and Mary the “Mother of God.”