The Four Marian Dogmas

Mary, Mother of God

What is Dogma?

A dogma is a definitive article of faith *(de fide)* that has been solemnly promulgated by the college of bishops at an ecumenical council or by the pope when speaking in a statement ex *cathedra*, in which the magisterium of the Church presents a particular doctrine as necessary for the belief of all Catholic faithful.

What is Heresy?

In Western Christianity, heresy most commonly refers to those beliefs which were declared to be anathema by any of the ecumenical councils recognized by the Catholic Church. Heresy is the dislocation of some complete and self-supporting scheme by the introduction of a novel denial of some essential part therein. (Hilaire Belloc)

What is Heresy?

- Since the Great Schism and the Protestant Reformation, various Christian churches have also used the concept in proceedings against individuals and groups deemed to be heretical by those churches.
- In the East, the term "heresy" is eclectic and can refer to anything at variance with Church tradition

THE PROTESTANT POSITION ON MARY AS MOTHER OF GOD

- One of the first attacks on Mary by the pessimists we encountered was that Mary was the mother of Jesus but certainly not the Mother of God. Little did they know that this was exactly the heresy the Church was trying to combat way back in the 5th Century (431 AD) at the Council of Ephesus when it declared Mary the “Theotokos” or “God-bearer”, hence, “Mother of God”.

THE CATHOLIC POSITION ON MARY AS MOTHER OF GOD

- The Council of Ephesus, 431 A.D. an ecumenical meeting of Latin and Orthodox bishops to reach a consensus on Mary's title.
- Mary as Theotokos, the Mother of GOD, or
- Mary, as Christotokos, the Christ-Bearer who gave birth to Jesus.

THE CATHOLIC POSITION ON MARY AS MOTHER OF GOD

- The Council of Ephesus, while correcting the heresy, was confirming what was already revealed in the New Testament which reveal Mary as the Mother of God. In Luke1:13-15 gives us Gabriel's words to Mary at the Annunciation "And behold, you will conceive in your womb & bear a son, & you shall call his name Jesus, therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God".

Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.

Established that Jesus is the Son of God

Established that Jesus is both fully divine and fully human

Rejected the Arian heresy that s taught that Jesus Christ was divine/holy and was sent to earth for the salvation of mankind but that Jesus Christ was not equal to God the Father (infinite, primordial origin) in rank *and* that God the Father and the Son of God were not equal to the Holy Spirit (power of God the Father).

Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.

- Under Arianism, Christ was instead not consubstantial with God the Father since both the Father and the Son under Arius were made of "like" essence or being but not of the same essence or being.
- The orthodox view, of course, views the Second and Third persons of the Trinity as having existed in eternity, outside of our time stream, and thus Jesus is fully God.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

- The Athanasian Creed recognized this doctrine and affirmed its importance stating that He is God from the essence of the Father begotten before time and he is human from the essence of His mother, born in time, completely God, completely human with a rational soul and human flesh, equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

- Although He is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh, but by God taking humanity to himself, He is one, certainly not by the blending of His essence, but by the unity of His person.

Nestorian Heresy

- Bishop Nestor of Constantinople promoted false teaching that Christ *is two persons*, one human and one divine. Christ as a human person joined to the Divine Person of God's Son.
- Mary being human only bore the human person in her womb so she ought to be known only as the Christ Bearer, Christotokos.

What Does the Catechism Say…

Catechism of the Catholic Church, #466“For this reason, the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 431 that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her womb.

What Does the Catechism Say…

- ”Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the only Vigil, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh.”

What Does the Catechism Say…

In CCC 495 Mary's Divine Motherhood, it states, "Called in the Gospels, "the mother of Jesus," Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, "as the mother of my Lord."

What Does the Catechism Say…

In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son, according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence, the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God" (Theotokos).

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- CCC 963 “Mary is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer…She is clearly the mother of the members of Christ…since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.”
- Therefore, Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church.

PROOF FROM SCRIPTURES

- At the Visitation, Elizabeth already knew when she exclaimed to Mary “Most blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Luke 1:43-44
- Elizabeth’s own unborn child “leapt for joy” upon hearing Mary’s greeting to Elizabeth.

“Woman, behold your son….“Behold your Mother.” John 19:26-27

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Acts 2:14 Pentecost

"All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."

Dogma of the Assumption

ASSUMPTION

- This Marian dogma was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on Nov. 1, 1950 on his Encyclical Munificentissimus Deus.

The essential message of this dogma is as follows; “We pronounce, declare and define it to be divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory.”

ASSUMPTION

- The term assumed, as used by the Church, means that when her life on earth ended, Mary did not suffer the decay of the grave but was taken into heaven by God. That her body did not corrupt in a tomb is in keeping with her role as the sinless, immaculate Virgin Mother of God. The Eastern Church calls her passing the Dormition of Mary (Latin for falling asleep) and began celebrating a feast by that name in the fourth or fifth century.

ASSUMPTION

- Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-90), “By her assumption is meant that not only her soul, but her body also, was taken up to heaven upon her death, so that there was no long period of her sleeping in the grave, as is the case with others, even great saints, who wait for the last day for the resurrection of their bodies.”

From Doctrine to Dogma

- At the onset of the 20th Century, a movement for the proclamation of the Assumption as a dogma gradually grew stronger.
- May 1, 1946 – Pope Pius XII sent to all bishops of the world the encyclical "Deipare Virginis" inquiring whether the doctrine be declared a dogma. Positive response 98%, negative response 2%
- Between 1949 – 1950 many petitions for the dogma reached Rome from 113 cardinals, 18 Patriarchs, 2505 Archbishops and Bishops, 32,000 priests and men religious, 50,000 religious women and 8 million lay people.

The Dormition (Death) of Mary

- St. Andrew of Crete (660-726) explained: “Death, natural to men, also reached her; not, however, to imprison her, as happens to us, or to vanquish her, God forbid! It was only to secure for her the experience of that sleep which comes from on high, leading us up to the object of hope.
- Therefore, death does not come to her in the same way it comes to us. Instead, it comes in a superior way, and for a reason higher than the reasons that oblige us to surrender totally to death.”

Immaculate Conception

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

- The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- Defined by Pope Pius IX, in the encyclical “Ineffabilis Deus”.
- This was promulgated on December 8, 1854

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The definition:

"We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception … was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful."

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

- From the same papal encyclical – how the Immaculate Conception was done: "...by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race.“

THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

- LONG history of discussion, in the Church, concerning whether this was possible and how it could be so. See http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm for a discussion of this (the 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia).
- Final answer provided by Duns Scotus (d. 1308) who dispelled the objections so "that from that time onward the doctrine prevailed (Ref. above article).

ORIGINAL SIN

- Original Sin – the tendency to sin innate in all human beings, held to be inherited from Adam in consequence of the Fall. The concept of original sin was developed in the writings of St. Augustine (Oxford English Dictionary).

FORETOLD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- The Immaculate Conception foretold in Genesis 3:14-15, the so-called “protoevangelium”:

- The LORD God said to the serpent, "… I will put enmity between you and the woman…”

- Spoken of in Luke 1:28: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

DOGMA OF THE IMMACULCATE CONCEPTION

The significance of the doctrine: The Blessed Virgin Mary as a perfect, sinless mother to bear Jesus Christ.

The follow-up: Our Lady of Lourdes, 1858

The teachings of St. Maximilian Kolbe in the 1930's and 1940's

DOGMA OF THE IMMACULCATE CONCEPTION

- Apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11 – July 16, 1858.
- How Our Lady described herself, at Lourdes: “I am the Immaculate Conception”
- The challenge in this description:
- How can a human being describe them self as being a “Conception ?

- St. Maximilian Kolbe, 8 January 1894 – 14 August 1941
- Franciscan friar, very devoted to Our Lady as the “Immaculata”.
- Died at Auschwitz concentration camp after being given a poisonous injection, after 9 days without food or water.
- Spent much time meditating on what our Lady meant by her self-identification at Lourdes.

- **Final document of St. Kolbe, written on the evening, before his arrest in February, 1941, helping us understand what Our Lady meant in what she said at Lourdes:**

- **“The Father begets; the Son is begotten; the Spirit is the “conception” that springs from their love.**

- **... The Spirit is, then, this thrice holy “conception, 'this infinitely holy, “The creature most completely filled with this love, filled with God himself, was the Immaculata. ... United to the Holy Spirit as His spouse, she is one with God in an incomparably more perfect way than can be predicated of any other creature. If among human beings the wife takes the name of her husband ... with how much greater reason should the name of the Holy Spirit, who is the divine Immaculate Conception, be used as the name of her in whom he lives as uncreated Love?”**

Perpetual Virginity

Perpetual Virginity

The popular concept of virginity is limited to a narrow concept of physical integrity or lack of sexual union. However, a broader concept of virginity is the ideal of total personhood according to what a person should be in God's revelation of the total man: spirit, soul and body consecrated according to Christ. Thus, virginity is a concept that is not limited merely to the physical aspect but is an eternal value which springs forth from God's Original Plan of man as a total and complete human being in Christ. In other words, it is the state of wholeness, completeness and integrity of a person according to what is meant to be in the purpose of God by which man has been created.

Perpetual Virginity

The dogma about Mary's perpetual virginity maintains that Mary was ever virgin before, during & after the birth of Jesus Christ. In Luke, "The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph" (Lk 1:27). St. Justin Martyr in the second century wrote, "But the power of God, coming upon the Virgin, overshadowed her, and caused her, while yet a Virgin, to conceive." God's glory is magnified through the virgin birth of Jesus. When we contemplate his divinity and his glory, we quickly recognize the purity of the vessel that carried him in her womb.

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Perpetual Virginity

St. Augustine (354-430) said, “A virgin conceives, yet remains a virgin; a virgin is heavy with child; a virgin brings forth her child, yet she is always virgin. Why are you amazed at this, O man? It was fitting for God to be born thus when he deigned to become man”

Perpetual Virginity

- The Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 553 called Mary, “the holy and glorious ever virgin.”

Then, in 679, following the local Council of Lateran, Pope Martin (r. 649-55) decreed, “If anyone does not properly and truly confess in accord with the holy Fathers, that the holy Mother of God and ever Virgin and Immaculate Mary in the earliest of the ages conceived of the Holy Spirit without seed, namely, God the Word Himselfspecifically and truly, who was born of God the Father before all ages, and that she incorruptibly bore [Him], her virginity remaining indestructible even after His birth, let him be condemned” (Canon 3).

Mary's Gift to God –Her Virginity and Faith

- CCC 506 alludes to Mary's faith & undivided heart here: "Mary is a virgin because her virginity is the sign of her faith unadulterated by any doubt & of her undivided gift of herself to God's will. It is her faith that enables her to become the Mother of Savior.
- St. Augustine taught: "Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ."

A Virgin Before Birth

The prophet Isaiah 7:14 foretold: “Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a Virgin will conceive & bear a son & His name shall be Emmanuel.

And the New Testament (Luke 1:26-27) confirms it: “The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin betrothed & the virgin’s name is Mary. And then there is the dialogue between Mary & the angel at the annunciation that leads to the miraculous “overshadowing” of Mary by the power of the God. (Luke 35)

A Virgin During Birth

Tradition also reaffirms this in the Apostles' Creed: Born of the Virgin Mary.

CCC 499 reiterates what the 2nd Vatican Council had previous taught: "the deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real & 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 virginal's integrity but sanctified it.

A Virgin after Birth
(On the brothers of Jesus)

The Catechism 500 replies: “Against this doctrine, the objection sometimes raised that the Bible mentions brothers & sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to the other children of the Virgin Mary.

A Virgin after Birth
(On the brothers of Jesus)

- In fact, James & Joseph, “brothers of Jesus”, are the sons of another Mary, disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls “the other Mary”. They are close relations of Jesus, according to an Old Testament expression.