



The Angelus

Saint Mary's Anglican Catholic Church

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Trinity

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Saint Mary the Virgin: A Brief Biblical Introduction

[Note: This is the first of several articles on the Blessed Virgin Mary planned for *The Angelus* in the coming year.]

We most often refer to our parish church as “St Mary’s.” Most of the time, we do not give it much thought. The name “Mary” is the Anglicized rendering of the name *Μαρία* (*Maria*) or *Μαριάμ* (*Mariam*), both used in the original Greek of the New Testament. There are six women referred to in the English New Testament as *Mary*. These themes would all be made manifest in the events that followed Jesus’ holy conception birth, and in the history of Christian biblical interpretation and theological formulation that followed Christ’s Ascension.

It is neither a coincidence nor a surprise that so many women in the Gospels bear this name. *Maria* or *Mariam* are Greek renderings of the Hebrew name מִרְיָם or *Miriam*. Miriam was the sister of the Prophet Moses and the Priest Aaron, who as a prophetess herself helped lead the people of Israel at the time of the Exodus, the parting of the Red Sea, and years of wandering in the wilderness.

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. (Exodus 15:19-21)

The Hebrew or Aramaic roots of the name have been variously and somewhat disparately etymologized as “rebellion,” “bitter sea,” “strong waters,” “exalted one,” “ruling one,” “wished for child,” or “beautiful.” The themes rooted in the name *Miriam* or *Mary* would all be made manifest in the events that followed Jesus’ holy conception and birth, and in the history of Christian biblical interpretation and doctrinal formulation in the generations that followed His life, death, and Resurrection. Though the six women named *Miriam* or *Mary* in the New Testament might all be referred to as “Saint Mary,” we are of course concerned here with Saint Mary the Virgin, the Mother of

our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us first look briefly at what the Four Gospels have to say about Mary, both Virgin and Mother.

We begin with St Luke’s Gospel. Mary lived in the city of Nazareth in the region called Galilee. (*St Luke* 1:26) Luke tells us she was a *virgin*; that she did not *know* a man sexually. She was however *espoused* to a descendent of King David of Israel named Joseph, a carpenter by trade. (*St Luke* 1:27; *St Matthew* 1:18; 13:55) In Israel, public espousals established the unbreakable bond of matrimony between Mary and Joseph even *before they came together*. (*St Matthew* 1:18) Infidelity on the part of either of them would have been adultery, a crime punishable by death under the Law of Moses. (See *Leviticus* 20:10; *Deuteronomy* 22:22) The Lord sent an angel or archangel named Gabriel to Mary in Nazareth, who greeted her with, *Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women*. (*St Luke* 1:19, 26-28) As we will examine later in this series, the words of this angelic greeting (the original *Angelus*) have been rendered and interpreted in different ways over the centuries.

The Archangel Gabriel continued, *Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS...* (See *St Luke* 1:31-33) Saint Luke takes care to emphasize that Mary was a virgin; yet she would conceive and bear a child without having sexual relations with Joseph or any other man. Though Mary responded in faith to God’s Word through the message of an angel, she did not understand at first *how* this Word might come to pass given the nature of things and her current status and circumstances. *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* (*St Luke* 1:34) The answer from the LORD was abundantly or at least sufficiently clear: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.... For with God nothing shall be impossible*. (*St Luke* 1:35-37) The Blessed Virgin of Nazareth submitted herself to God’s revealed will in full faith and trust in Him and His Word.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. (St Luke 1:38) Mary's espoused husband received a similar angelic message in a dream; that he might serve the LORD as the guardian and protector of both Mother and Child. (See St Matthew 1:18-22)

Archangel Gabriel invited and in effect commanded Mary to visit her cousin Elizabeth, a woman who like her husband Zacharias was well stricken in years yet had conceived a child in old-age, as did Sarah, the wife of Abraham and mother of all Israel. (See St Luke 1:1-25) But when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her son John leapt in her womb for joy; and the Holy Ghost moved Elizabeth to prophesy, exclaiming, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* (St Luke 1:41-42) Elizabeth had conceived in old age, but still according to nature. The Child her cousin Mary had conceived was no ordinary manchild conceived by ordinary or natural means. The elder woman asked rhetorically, *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* She also praised Mary's faith in God and His Word. *And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* Mary learned of the circumstances of Elizabeth's son's wondrous yet natural conception; she waited three months until John was born, who according to God's call was the last of the Old Testament prophets to herald the advent of the son of David who was in truth the Son of God conceived in Mary the Virgin's womb through the Holy Ghost according to God's Word. As Miriam sang her prophetic song of the Lord's deliverance at the Red Sea; so, Mary of Nazareth was moved by the inspiration of the same Spirit to sing of Her own salvation at the Lord's Hand.

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.... (St Luke 1:46-50ff)

Saint Luke tells us that the nativity of Mary's child was ordinary in every respect, the only "sign" being the humble *swaddling clothes* in which He was wrapped at birth. Yet to some who longed for His advent received the joyful announcement of Christ's birth to shepherds tending their flocks in the cold and dark of night, who heard the angelic host sing, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* (See St Luke 2:1-20)

Mary and Joseph faithfully performed all that the Law of God required regarding the Child. He was circumcised on the eighth day and named Jesus as His Father in heaven decreed. (St Luke 2:21; Leviticus -St Luke 1:31) He was presented in the Temple as Mary's firstborn at her purification. Mary heard Simeon's prophecy of the joy and the sorrows to come reflected in her name itself. (St Luke 2:22-39) Jesus' parents took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover when at age twelve they found Him among the experts in the Law. (St Luke 2:41-52) Through all these events from Christ's early life, we know Mary pondered and kept these things in her heart. (St Luke 2:19, 51) She witnessed the first miracle of Jesus' public ministry at Cana, and as the first evangelist, *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.* (St John 2:1-11) She followed her Son to Calvary and stood at the foot of the cross, where Christ committed her to St John's filial care. Mary also sat among the apostles for the election of Matthias and on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 1:14; 2:1)

Saint Matthew in describing Christ's early life often refers to *the young child and His mother.* (St Matthew 2:13-14, 20-21) Though Mary was indeed Jesus' mother whom Gabriel described as blessed and full of grace, she was also His first disciple. Recall that *a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* (St Luke 11:27-28)

Schedule for August 2026

Sunday, August 2, Ninth Sunday after Trinity

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Thursday, August 6, Transfiguration of Our Lord

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Sunday, August 9, Tenth Sunday after Trinity

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Saturday, August 15, Saint Mary the Virgin

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Sunday, August 16, Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Sunday, August 23, Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Monday, August 24, St Bartholomew the Apostle

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion

Sunday, August 30, Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

9:30am: Morning Prayer

10:00am: Holy Communion