

Biblical Portrait of Mary Talk

Ave Maria...

- National Geographic recently declared that Mary is the most influential woman in human history in both the secular and religious sense! When we speak of Mary, The Holy Scriptures is not the immediate place many Catholics will turn to speak of the Holy Mother of God. More often we will speak of the Rosary, of some Marian apparition, Of Louis de Montfort's Total Consecration to Mary, the countless works of art and musical compositions composed in her honour and the various Marian feasts days we celebrate throughout the Liturgical Year.
- But without a biblical foundation, our Marian devotions and liturgical feasts lose their source and origin. We are likely all familiar with those passages of the Gospels that speak of Mary, most notably of the childhood of Jesus and when she stood by His Cross, but where else do we discover Mary in both the Old and New Testaments???
- St Augustine- NT is hidden in OT, OT is made manifest in NT. This too occurs when speaking of Mary in the Bible.
- I would like to explore a number of images in both the OT and NT to help us understanding the scriptural foundation of Our Church's understanding of both important Marian dogmas, Mary's role in salvation history and the origins of many biblical images that have found their way into Christian art and piety. A gradual unfolding of her identity as Salvation History also gradually unfolds.
- **The Woman who crushes the head of the serpent- Creation**
- Return to the Garden of Eden- the encounter with the First Woman, Eve, the Mother of all the living but with her fall into sin alongside her husband Adam, she loses this privilege of being the true mother of all generations of Man.
- Jesus and Mary were understood in the Early Church as being the New Adam and the New Eve, Jesus the one who would restore a fallen creation and from his pierced side would give birth to his bride, the Church. Mary is then the new Eve, not as the husband of Jesus for she is the spouse of the Holy Spirit, but the spiritual mother who will become the new mother of all the living, as she spiritually she is mother to all those who received new life by water and the spirit through baptism.
- Protoevangelium- The first gospel, the promise that one will come to crush the head of the ancient serpent to restore humanity back to God. Some translations of the Bible read that "she will strike your head and you will strike at his heel." This translation lead to a longstanding tradition in

Christian iconography and statues of Mary crushing the head of the devil. Now many object to this image since this passage from Genesis is also translated as “He will crush thy head and you will strike his heel.” Most certainly this is true, it is Christ who crushed the head of Satan through his Cross. I would suggest this is a passage we read in the Catholic sense of both/and, meaning it speaks both of how Mary will crush Satan and how Jesus will crush him and how together they will work together for human salvation, with Christ as the sole mediator between God and Man and redeemer of the universe and Mary as the co-redemptrix, the one who participates most fully and effectively in the Lord’s work of redemption.

- This is captured most beautiful in a statue of Mary and the child Jesus where it shows the child Jesus’ foot on the head of Satan, crushing down on it, and Mother’s foot on top of the child’s, helping him to press down on the Devil’s head. Christ is the one who crushes and Mary aids her son in his work of redemption.
- This theme of the woman who will crush the head of the ancient foe will appear on two other occasions in the Bible. In the Book of Judges, we encounter Jael who drives a tent peg through the head of Sisera, and delivers Israel from bondage and also in the Book of Judith when the heroic Judith cuts off the head of Holophenes. In both of these acts of valour, a woman delivers a mortal blow to the head of one’s enemies, and we have foreshadowing of how Mary will work with Christ to crush the head of Satan.

Mary as the Ark of the Covenant- Time of Exodus

- The People honour God by creating a tabernacle in the desert as the place where the spirit of God dwelt on earth. Within the tabernacle was the Ark, fashioned to detailed specifications and containing within it three items: The 10 commandments, the Manna and the Staff of Aaron: the Law of God, the Bread that came down from heaven and the staff of the priesthood of Israel.
- Now the Ark will be lost during the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians. The Second Book of Maccabees tells us that Jeremiah hide the Ark in a cave and declared it be an unmarked hidden place that would not be found again until God willed. After sealing the cave a cloud descended over it and kept it secret from the people.
- We will not encounter the Ark until the final book of the Bible when St John has a vision of the Ark now being in heaven. But he does not see a golden box flanked by two cherubim. Rather He sees Mary, appearing in the clouds because she is the New Ark of the Covenant!
- What did she carry in her womb? The 10 commandments who is Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the Law of Israel, the Manna who is Jesus Christ, the true

bread that came down from heaven as the Holy Eucharist and the staff of Aaron, for Jesus is the eternal high priest of the order of Melchizedek, having a priesthood much greater than that of the high priest Aaron and the tribe of Levi.

- As the true tabernacle of God, Mary's body then becomes the new Holy of Holies in the Temple. From her Jesus will come forth into the world and from his broken body on the Cross the New Temple is formed, not by rock and mortar but blood and water, the Eucharist and Baptism who forms God's holy people. But Mary will remain the heart of God's People, the Holy of Holies, she who gave life to the world....

The One who Magnifies the Lord- Time of the Judges

- Hannah in the OT, a woman who struggled to conceive but is willing to offer his first born son totally for God's service. When she is given Samuel, she returns him back to God to be his prophet and sings a beautiful song of praise and gratitude for the gift of her son who will be light to Israel.
- When Mary meets Elizabeth, another woman who had long been barren and who is now pregnant, she too was willing to also give her son, JBap, back to God to be a servant and prophet of YHWH.
- Mary brings to fulfillment the song that Hannah sang thousands of years before in her Magnificat. Elizabeth greets Mary with the same salutation that was given to Judith (Blessed are you among women), remembering this was a salutation given to women who had helped to save the entire nation of Israel. So too is Mary given this title as the one who will give birth to the Messiah who will save not only Israel but all of humanity.
- In the Magnificat, Mary first of all sings of the blessings God has bestowed upon her, she glorifies him first and recognizes that because he has done great things to her then can confidently say all generations will all her blessed, this is not arrogant boasting but humble recognition that to be the Mother of the Messiah is to be the one to would help restore the fallen Davidic monarchy and cooperate in the work of redemption.
- She was the one whom countless Jewish mothers longed to be, the mother of the anointed one, to recognize yourself as being this woman necessitates that you glorify God for having chosen you for so great a privilege.
- Mary's connection to the great mothers of the OT- to Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Hanna, Ruth, etc. Her lineage is that of the great mothers and matriarchs of the OT, making her the fulfillment in a long list of mothers who trusted in the word of the Lord and whose offspring forged the bloodline that would culminate in the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of God.

The Queen Mother- Time of the Davidic Monarchy

- The role of the Queen in ancient Israel after the establishment of the Davidic monarchy did not see the wife of the king functioning as the most important woman in the kingdom.
- In part because the kings of Israel had multiple wives, not even his first wife was given a position of prominence in the Kingdom. But there was a woman in the royal family who exercised considerable power and influence as the chief intercessor to the king, and this was the queen mother whose position of power and influence was assured for as long as the king reigned over the kingdom of Israel and Judah.
- The queen mother was seen a stabilizing figure in the monarchy, who was not a rival among the wives and was a symbol of the continuation of the Davidic line of kings whereas the king's wives were from many ethnic and religious backgrounds.
- We read that Solomon even rose from his throne when his mother Bathsheba entered the room to intercede on the behalf of other court officials or common people. All others who entered the presence of the king were expected to stand and his wives were to bow when he entered, only the queen mother was given the same privilege of the king.
- Solomon bowed to her and had her sit in the place of greatest honour, at his right hand. He honors her for she will never be his rival. And so when we speak of the reign of Christ the King, we realize that at his side must also reign the Queen Mother, Mary.
- NEW meaning to the wedding feast at Cana. Not only is Mary addressed with the title WOMAN by Jesus, an allusion to Eden and the name of Eve, is a formal title, not a derogatory one, but also see Mary as the one who intercedes on behalf of the wedding guests. But more than that what Mary does is this moment is intercede on behalf of all her children is asking Jesus to begin his messianic reign, to enter into his hour which means the beginning of his royal road to the Cross and Resurrection. Her request for the new wine of the messianic age is what begins the Hour of Jesus Christ, her intercession is of the utmost importance for our salvation.

Virgin Daughter of Zion- Time of the Prophets

- Digression- Marian piety of the past three popes: JPII was Totus Tuus, his pontificate was markedly Marian, from encyclicals that spoke of her role as

Mother of the Redeemer and of the Church, to his miraculous survival from assassination attempt, to images of him with rosary in hand.

- Pope Francis has offered a Marian spirituality rooted in popular piety and outward affection for Mary as mother. His tradition of visiting the church of Mary Maggiore to pray before the image of the Salus Romanus Populii (one of the icons of Mary said to be painted by St Luke, processed around Rome in times of violence and plague, last done so by Pius XII during WWII).
- But what of Pope Benedict? He did not write any encyclicals of Mary like JP II and does not have the same outward piety of Pope Francis, was he a Marian Pope? To answer that question, need to explore his vast writings and find what he wrote on Mary.
- During the 1970's, Joseph Ratzinger wrote a series of meditations on Mary under the book title Daughter Zion. In doing so, he brought attention to a biblical image of Mary that is frequently omitted in the study of Mariology.
- Daughter Zion was a term used to speak of the People of Israel during the time of the prophets. The expression, Daughter Zion and Virgin Daughter Zion appears in the writings of the Major Prophets like Isaiah and the Minor Prophets like Zephaniah.
- Ratzinger: The person of Mary weaves a portrait of Daughter Zion, the prophet's announcement of the mystery of the election and covenant that God has with Israel and His unshakeable love for her.
- Throughout the prophetic writings, the chosen people are often described as a woman, who is a virgin, beloved by God and who is mysteriously a wife virgin and mother. This image is meant to embody the People of Israel and their relationship with God. The image of God's marriage to the People of Israel is also an image of the covenant between them, one of marital love and commitment, an eternal, indestructible love. Despite tensions and betrayal of the People against God, his love for them remains irrevocable and everlasting.
- The People of the OT fall short of being Daughter Zion and so the prophets long for her arrival. She is first revealed in the person of the Virgin Mary, who in her unwavering fidelity to God, from the moment of the Annunciation, to stand by her son at the Cross and awaiting the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, who will be with her until her glorious assumption into heaven. Mary as Daughter Zion is the child of God the Father, Mother to God the Son and mystical virginal spouse to God the Holy Spirit. The covenant that Mary lives with God becomes a model of the marriage that Christ will have with his church, taking the People of God to be his chaste bride.

Mary as Seat of Wisdom- Wisdom literature and End of OT

- In the final books of the OT, we encounter the figure of Sophia, that is wisdom. Wisdom is seen as the mediatrix of creation and salvation history, as God's first creature. Frequently the Church has seen in the Wisdom literature of the OT a foreshadowing of Mary.
- Wisdom, that comes from God, is understood to need to reside in a pure and grace filled dwelling place. Since Jesus, the Word of God, is also divine wisdom incarnate, then Mary is seen as the specially prepared dwelling place for divine wisdom to enter into our created world.
- Mary's womb is seen as the fruitfulness of grace, of the one who gave the perfect yes to God and so experienced the entrance of the Word and Wisdom of God to dwell within her and take flesh of her immaculate flesh.

The totality of the OT images of Mary in the sign of Rev 12

- Throughout this talk I have alluded to how the various images of Mary in the OT are found in the description of Mary in Revelation 12 (read this passage). One could say this image of Mary is the culmination of all the OT foreshadowing about her. Now it must be noted that the women described in Rev 12 has also been said to be an image of the People of Israel and an image of the Church.
- For some, these interpretations are meant to eliminate the possibility that this passage also speaks of Mary. But as we showed in the image of Daughter Zion in the OT, biblical images can be ascribed to various individuals and in no way be in contradiction with one another.
- Mary was declared by VCII to be the perfect model of the Church, embodying her in pilgrimage of faith the pilgrimage the Church has embarked upon until she is revealed in her full glory at the end of Time.
- REV 12 is a triple image: Of the People of Israel, of the Church and in the person of the Holy Mother of God.
- Let us review our OT images of Mary to see where they appear in Rev 12:
- The one who crushes the devils head: the dragon seeking to devour the pregnant women, an image of the Church, pregnant with the Word of God and able to give birth to new offspring via baptism, so too speaks of Mary in her pregnancy and virginal motherhood, once too Herod sought to kill her son but he now reigns incorruptible, and he has crushed Satan under his heel.
- The one who magnifies the Lord: The vision of Mary in Heaven, she who was lowly and humble of heart in this light is now exalted as the empress of heaven, her very presence in heaven gives glory to the Lord of Hosts
- Mary as the Ark: In Rev 11 (get passage), speak of the Ark appearing in heaven after it had long been lost on earth, the Ark is Mary who shows the

contents of the Ark to be alive in the person of Her Son, the king of kings and Lord of Lords.

- Mary as Queen Mother- her divine clothing- crowned as the Queen of Israel and the Apostles, with moon under her feet (note Our Lady of Guadalupe of how this was a sign of conquering false Gods), clothed in the Sun (prophecy of Malachi, the rising sun). 12 stars (both tribes and apostles)
- Virgin Daughter Zion- Mary is a sign of the glorified Israel, Virgin Daughter Zion now free of her enemies and shining as a light to the nations.
- Seat of Wisdom and Gate of Heaven- Mary shows the heights of wisdom, of being with the Lord and she is the gate through which we come to Jesus.
- ****The importance of the Assumption- more than just Mary being body and soul in heaven, is also the sign of the Church's destiny to be like Mary, knowing the fullness of resurrected life in the new heaven and new earth.

The Biblical foundation of the Church's devotion to and theological understanding of Mary has been a consistent part of Divine Revelation since the Church's inception.

Mary was the Church before the Church was born from the open side of the Crucified One. She now reigns in heaven, interceding on our behalf and inspiring us to stay close to her Son.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.