

Mary – From *The Whole Truth About the Catholic Church and the Holy Bible*. By Fr. John Noone

Mary – Always A Virgin

Some say that Mary had other children besides Jesus.

Others say that Mary was a virgin before and after Jesus was born.

Some people read in the Bible “brethren of the Lord” and presume that Mary had children other than Jesus.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

What Does the Bible Say?

A document, written around 120 A.D. called the “Protoevangelium of James” is in existence. It sets out to prove that Mary was a virgin, both before and after Jesus was born. There would have been people alive then who knew Mary.

Brethren can mean different relationships.

It can mean:

1. Sons of the same parent. “So Rebekah said to Jacob her son, saying, ‘Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother...’” (Genesis 27:6)
2. Nephew. Lot was the nephew of Abraham (Genesis 11:27) and yet Abraham says to Lot, “...for we are brethren...” (Genesis 13:8)
3. Friend. “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan.” (2 Samuel 1:26) David is speaking to his friend Jonathan.
4. Members of the same tribe or clan. “And that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you?” (Numbers 16:10)
5. Members of the same race or nation. “If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.” (Deuteronomy 15:12)
6. Members of a related nation. “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.” (Deuteronomy 23:7)

Those who revolted against the Church – Martin Luther, John Calvin & Ulrich Zwingli – believed that Mary was always a virgin and acknowledged it as the teaching of the Bible.

In the New Testament, Christians are called brothers about 160 times. Jesus Himself says that a person who does the Will of the Father is His own brother.

Some New Testament examples:

“By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him...” (1 Peter 5:12)

“I, John, both your brother and companion in tribulation...” (Revelation 1:9)

The brethren of the Lord were not other children of Mary because:

1. The Bible does not say that Mary had other children.
2. If Mary had other children, why would Jesus, when he was dying on the cross, have given His mother into the care of John the Apostle? “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple ‘Behold your mother?’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.” (John 19:26-27)
3. In Hebrew and Aramaic, there is no word for “cousin.” Aramaic is the language spoken by Jesus. To mean “cousin” they would have to talk around it, so they chose to use the term “brother.”
4. “(Joseph) did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son (Matthew 1:25).” This seems to imply that Joseph and Mary lived together as husband and wife and had other children after her firstborn Son was born. “Till,” meaning “until” had a different meaning when the Bible was written than it has today. When the Bible was written “till” meant that an event did not happen up to a certain point in time. It did not imply that it happened after that point in time. Firstborn does not mean that others were born afterwards. To the ancient Jews, it meant whatever opened the womb.

Similarly, the following passage of Scripture, “Therefore, Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death.” (2 Samuel 6:23)

“To” is often translated “till” or “until”, and of course, does not imply that she had children after her death.

So, the Truth is: Mary was a virgin before and after she gave birth to Jesus.

Was Jesus An Only child?

Yes, in the biological sense. In the spiritual sense, He has millions of brothers and sisters, if they do the Will of the Father.

From the early Church there are other writers who say that Mary was always a virgin.

Ignatius of Antioch (d. 110) Justin Martyr (100-165)

Irenaeus (c. 130-200) Origen (248 A.D.)

Hilary of Poitiers (354 A.D.) Athanasius (360 A.D.)

Jerome (383 A.D.) Ambrose of Milan (388 A.D.)

Pope Siricius I (392 A.D.) Augustine (401 A.D.)

Pope Leo I (450 A.D.)

Protestants, as a whole, accept the teachings of early Councils of the Church. Three of the seven Ecumenical Councils of the Church clearly and emphatically teach that

Mary was always a virgin. They are Constantinople II (553 A.D.). Constantinople III (680 A.D.), and Nicaea II (787 A.D.)

The Bible NEVER speaks of the “Children of Mary”. It does speak of Mary, Mother of Jesus, but never Mary, Mother of Jesus, James, Joseph, and daughters.

Mark 6:30 says, “Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary”, not a son of Mary.

In the Old and New Testament, the term brother could mean different relationships.

So, the Truth is: Jesus was her only child.