

What Should Anglicans Say about St. Mary?

Anglican Marian theology is the summation of the doctrines and beliefs of Anglicanism concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary. As Anglicans believe that Jesus was both human and God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, within the Anglican Communion and Continuing Anglican churches, Mary is accorded honor as the theotokos, literally the "God-bearer" or "one who gives birth to God".

Anglicans of evangelical or low church tradition tend to avoid honoring or discussing Mary. Other Anglicans respect and honor Mary because of the special religious significance that she has within Christianity as the mother of Jesus Christ. This honor and respect is termed veneration.

Mary always held a place of honor within the English Church, but many of the doctrines surrounding her have been called into question over the centuries, most as the result of the Protestant Reformation. While Protestantism is based upon interpretation of scripture by a variety of 16th century reformers, who mostly rejected the practice of speaking directly to Mary and other saints (except in certain hymns, e.g. Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones, canticles, e.g. the Benedicite, and psalms, e.g. Psalm 148), Anglicanism has allowed for Mary and the saints to be addressed.

1. Anglicans recognize only one dogma about Mary: that she is the Theotokos, the Mother of God incarnate. All other doctrines, beliefs, or legends about Mary are secondary to her role as Mother of God.
2. Some Anglicans agree that the doctrine of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary is sound and logical, but without more scriptural proof it may not be considered dogmatic.
3. Most Anglicans reject the idea of Mary as Co-Redemptrix and any interpretation of the role of Mary that obscures the unique mediation of Christ.
4. Anglicans typically believe that all doctrines concerning Mary must be linked with the doctrines of Christ and the Church.
5. Anglicans recognize Mary as an example of holiness, faith and obedience for all Christians; and that Mary can be seen as a prophetic figure of the Church. As the Gospel of Luke (1.48) states "henceforth all nations shall call me blessed," she is often considered to have a unique place of importance within the Communion of Saints.
6. The Anglican Communion observes all the traditional Marian festivals of the ancient Catholic Church.

Anglicans who ask Mary and the saints for their prayers do so because they believe the church is a communion which embraces the living and the dead. God wants us to pray for each other and to ask each other for prayer because this is a way of binding us all together in love. This is part of the mystery of intercessory prayer.

We do not ask Mary and the saints for their prayers because we fear to go directly to God any more than we ask our friends to pray for us for a similar reason. We ask them to pray for us because this links us closer together in fellowship and communion. God wills to help us

through the petitions of other people. Mary and the saints are examples and role models, sources of inspiration and encouragement. They are also friends who stand beside us, fellow disciples who support us on our pilgrimage. No Christian is obliged to ask Mary and the saints for their prayers but the custom is a powerful reminder of the nature of the church as communion.

Pondering Further the Ministry of St. Mary, the Mother of Our Lord

1. Discussing Giotto's *The Flight into Egypt*, ask members to close their eyes and visualize the holy family's flight to Egypt as you read Matthew 2:13-15. Invite them to share what they have imagined. What would Giotto make Mary the central figure, a departure from the gospel account that focuses on Joseph (Matthew 2:13-15). A guiding angel looks directly at Mary. DO you see that it is her strength AS A Holy Mother that is conveyed to the viewer. Does it not appear that Mary is protector of the Christ Child and, by extension of the Church?



2. Assign four groups to study the gospel accounts in Matthew 27:55-61, Mark 15:40-47, Luke 23:48-56, and John 19:38-42. Who are the women, according to the Synoptic Gospels, present at the crucifixion and burial of Jesus? According to the Gospel of John, who prepares Jesus' body for burial? Do any of the Gospels describe What Giotto depicts?



The Lamentation depicts the three Marys grieving over Jesus' body after it had been taken from the cross. Though this traditional scene is apocryphal, it includes details from biblical accounts. "Mary, the mother of Jesus, wearing a deepaquamarine gown, holds the head and upper body of Jesus across her lap. This detail of the painting also recalls the *pietà* tradition of Mary mourning over the body of Jesus, another popular apocryphal subject," Hornik writes. "Giotto created a new kind of pictorial space in *Lamentation*. .[pushing]the entire narrative into the frontal plane, directly confronting the viewer with the monumentality and emotion of the scene."

3. The doctrines of Mariology (the theological study of Mary) in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches evolved over the years through reflection the biblical narratives, saint's experiences, regional practices, and official pronouncements. The differences between these three churches, which largely agree, and Protestants, who share no official doctrines about Mary, are a difficult reminder of division within the Body of Christ. The Roman Catholic Church recognized these four doctrines about Mary: (1) She was perpetually a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus; (2) she is truly the Mother of God (Council of Ephesus in 431); (3) she herself was immaculately conceived without original sin

(pronouncement of Pope Pius IX in 1854); and (4) she was assumed body and soul into heaven at the end of her earthly life (pronouncement of Pope Pius XII in 1950).