

Viri Christi



“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,
and men of violence take it by force.”

Matthew 11:12

Objective: *Ad Jesum per Mariam!* This Latin phrase which means, “To Jesus, Through Mary” is a perfect summary of our theme this month. October is the month of Mary, so we are going to explore what the Church teaches about our Blessed Mother. Though it may seem counterintuitive for a men’s group to look to a woman as the perfect model of following Christ, you will discover the Blessed Virgin Mary is the perfect person to lead us to Christ. In fact, she wants nothing more than to point us to her beloved Son.

- September – Who is Jesus?
- October – Mary, Our Blessed Mother
- November – Soldier of Christ (Real Presence)
- December – Christ’s Love for Us (Incarnation, Eucharist, and Redemption)
- January – The Domestic Church
- February – Sin and Grace
- March – The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
- April – The Purpose of the Church
- May – Evangelization

Podcast Schedule

- Episode #5 – Mary, Mother of God
- Episode #6 – Mary, Immaculately Conceived
- Episode #7 – Mary, Perpetual Virgin
- Episode #8 – Mary, Assumed into Heaven

Episode #5 – Mary, Mother of God

I. Introduction – Why should a woman be a centerpiece of a men’s group?

1. Come and See – Last week, we examined the use of the phrase “come and see” in the Gospel of John, and we discovered that phrase is used to invite a person to see where someone lives either literally or spiritually. The question I posed is “Where do you live?”. Are you living the fullness of life with Jesus Christ, or are you living in the tomb? This month, we are going to investigate the Blessed Virgin Mary’s role in leading us from tomb to glory.
2. *Ad Jesum per Mariam!* This Latin phrase, which means, “To Jesus, Through Mary” is a perfect summary of our theme this month. October is the month of Mary and the Rosary, so we are going to explore what the Church teaches about our Blessed Mother. Though it may seem counterintuitive for a men’s group to look to a woman as the perfect model of following Christ, you will discover the Blessed Virgin Mary is the perfect person to lead us to Christ. In fact, she wants nothing more than to point us to her beloved Son.
3. *Mother of the Saviour and Our Interior Life* by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “The two truths which stand out like mountain peaks in the chain of revelation concerning Our Blessed Lady . . . are her divine maternity and her fullness of grace” (3).

II. Mary, Mother of God

1. This is the most important Marian dogma because everything we believe about the Blessed Virgin flows from this great truth. “The divine maternity is . . . the foundation, source, and root of all Mary’s graces and privileges” (Garrigou-Lagrange, 24).
2. The Council of Ephesus (431): “If any one does not confess that the Emmanuel (Christ) in truth is God and that on this account the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God since according to the flesh she brought forth the Word of God made flesh, let him be anathema” (DH 252).
3. Objection: How can God have a mother?
 - a. The title Mother of God is intrinsically tied to what we believe about Jesus. The Hypostatic Union is the theological term that is used to explain the truth that Christ is one person with a human and divine nature.
 - b. Heretics in the early Church believed that Mary only gave Christ his human nature, so they refused to call her the Mother of God and rather called her the Mother of Christ.
 - c. They are wrong because the Blessed Virgin Mary did not give birth to a nature, but a person. Furthermore, Jesus is not a human person, but a divine person. The argument can be succinctly summarized as such:
 - i. Mary is the mother of Jesus.
 - ii. Jesus is God.
 - iii. Therefore, Mary is the Mother of God.

III. Hail Mary, Full of Grace

1. What is grace? “Sanctifying grace makes us participate in the very nature, in the inner life of God” (Garrigou-Lagrange, 27).
2. 2 Peter 1:14 – St. Peter says that God helps us to “escape from the corruption that is in the world . . . and become partakers of the divine nature.”
3. St. Thomas Aquinas explains that the fullness of grace exists in three different degrees.
 - a. In Our Lord: The absolute fullness of grace which Jesus Christ. Jesus did not grow in grace during his life. At the moment of his conception, he was completely full because he was the hypostatic union.
 - b. In our Lady: The Blessed Virgin Mary had a fullness of superabundance which was her special privilege. She unceasingly grew in grace because she was not hindered by original sin nor did she ever commit a personal sin. The superabundance of her grace spills over into our lives.
 - c. In Us: Our fullness of grace refers to the fact that God gives us an abundance of grace to perform good acts and become more Christlike throughout our lives.

IV. Application

1. Challenge: Are we looking to our Lord and Our Lady for the graces we need to live holy lives? Are we putting ourselves in a position to receive God’s grace? Are we giving God a fighting chance to make us into the men he wants us to be?
2. *Providence* by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “As fresh circumstances arise, with their attendant obligations, fresh actual graces are offered us in order that we may derive the greatest spiritual profit from them. Above the succession of external events that go to make up our life, there runs a parallel series of actual graces offered for our acceptance, just as the air comes in successive waves to enter our lungs and so make breathing possible. This succession of actual graces which we either agree to make use of for our spiritual benefit, or, on the other hand, neglect to do so, constitutes the history of each individual soul as it is written down in the book of life, in God, to be laid open some day for our inspection” (247-248).
3. October Monthly Challenge: Call Your Mother – A Decade of the Rosary
 - a. Pray the Rosary – The Rosary is one of the most cherished prayers in the history of the Church. When Our Lady of Fatima appeared to the three shepherd children, she implored them to pray the Rosary.
 - b. This month, we want to build on the habit we built last month with “The First 15” challenge. As you continue to start your day with our Lord, add at least one decade of the Rosary to your arsenal each day this month. You can do your decade after the Morning Offering and your Scripture study or return to it later in the day. Find what works for you! Our Lord and our Lady are pleased with the progress we made last month; let’s keep it up.

Episode #6 – Mary, Immaculately Conceived

I. Introduction – Can we honor Mary too much?

1. Last week: We discussed Mary as the Mother of God and the fact that she is full of grace. We discovered that our Lord and our Lady want to fill us with the superabundance of grace that flow from each of them. They are a never-ending tributary of grace to help us become the men God wants us to be.
2. Can we honor Mary too much? Sometimes Catholics are accused of worshipping Mary or giving her too much honor. Though the Blessed Virgin Mary has a superabundance of grace, there are limits to Mary's fullness of grace.
3. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma* by Ludwig Ott – “The measure of grace of the Mother of God falls as much short of Christ's fullness of grace as the dignity of the Mother of God falls short of the Hypostatic Union. On the other hand, the fullness of grace of the Mother of God as much transcends the fullness of grace of even the highest angels and saints as the dignity of the Mother of God surpasses the supernatural excellences of the angels and the saints” (214).
4. This week: We are going to look at the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Not only will we clarify its meaning, but we will also address one controversy surrounding this dogma.

II. Mary, the Immaculate Conception

1. In Lourdes, France, in 1858, a beautiful woman began meeting with a young girl named Bernadette. During the 16th meeting, Bernadette asked the woman to identify herself, and the woman said, “I am the Immaculate Conception.” The girl we now know as St. Bernadette had been meeting with the Blessed Mother herself all along.
2. *Ineffabilis Deus* by Pope Pius IX (Dec. 8, 1854) – The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved immune from all stain of original sin” (DH 2803).
3. Last week, we discovered that the Blessed Virgin Mary was “full of grace” did not have the stain of any personal sins. This week, we see that she did not have the stain of original sin either.
 - a. Original Justice: The Condition of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden
 - i. The Natural Gift: Existence
 - ii. The Supernatural Gift: Sanctifying Grace
 - iii. The Preternatural Gifts: Immortality, Immunity from Suffering, Infused Knowledge, and Integrity.
 - b. Original Sin
 - i. The Natural Gift: YES
 - ii. The Supernatural Gift & Preternatural Gifts: NO

4. When the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived in St. Anne's womb she was given granted all three gifts. She possessed the natural gift like all men, but she also was conceived the fullness of sanctifying grace. Moreover, she was given infused knowledge and integrity. Also, she was preserved from suffering and death as punishments of Original Sin, "even though both Jesus and Mary knew suffering and death in so far as they are consequences of our nature and endured them for our salvation" (Garrigou-Lagrange, Mother of the Saviour, 33-34).

III. Objection – Doesn't this contradict Scripture?

1. Objection: Christ is the universal Redeemer of all men without exception (Rom. 3:23; 5:12, 19; Gal. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Tim. 2:16); but if Mary did not contract original sin she would not have been redeemed; hence, since she was redeemed, she must have contracted original sin (Garrigou-Lagrange, 42).
2. Answer: "Blessed Duns Scotus answers this objection by referring to the idea of a redemption which is preservative, not liberative" (Garrigou-Lagrange, 42). In short, there are two ways to save someone:
 - a. First, you save a person from liberating them from his troubles. Second, you prevent a person from trouble in the first place. (Ex. Drowning)
 - b. Does Jesus redeem everyone, including the Blessed Virgin Mary, from sin? Yes. The difference is that he saves us after original and person sin, while he saved her before original and personal sin.

IV. Application – Don't Let the Perfect, Destroy the Good

1. Can you honor Mary too much? Yes and No – "Christ alone is immaculate of Himself, and by the double title of His Hypostatic Union and His virginal conception; Mary is immaculate through the merits of her Son" (Garrigou-Lagrange, 43).
2. Application: Our Lord and our Lady want us to come to them for the graces we need to live good and holy lives. Don't let the perfect destroy the good. It is easy to view our sacrifices as meager in the face of our Lady and our Lord. They are meager. But, we must not forget that our Lord is not a slave master, but calls us into friendship with himself. Also, the Blessed Virgin Mary is our mother. What mother is critical of a child's gift no matter how small? Keep this in mind this month.
3. October Monthly Challenge: Call Your Mother – A Decade of the Rosary
 - a. Pray the Rosary – The Rosary is one of the most cherished prayers in the history of the Church. When Our Lady of Fatima appeared to the three shepherd children, she implored them to pray the Rosary.
 - b. This month, we want to build on the habit we built last month with "The First 15" challenge. As you continue to start your day with our Lord, add at least one decade of the Rosary to your arsenal each day this month.

Episode #7 – Mary, Perpetual Virgin

I. Introduction – Was the Blessed Virgin Mary really perpetually virgin?

1. So far, we have discussed the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God, full of grace, and immaculately conceived. This week we turn our attention to the third Marian dogma, the perpetual virginity of Mary.
2. “Mary was a Virgin before, during, and after the Birth of Jesus Christ” (Ott, 220).
 - a. The First Lateran Council (649) – “Holy Mary, ever-virgin and immaculate . . . conceived really and truly of the Holy Spirit, without seed . . . she gave birth to Him without corruption (to her virginity), her virginity remaining equally inviolate after his birth” (DH 503).
 - b. Mary’s perpetual virginity is a virginity of mind, sense, and body. The Blessed Virgin is complete free of sexual sin and temptation to sin.

II. Virginity Before Birth – “Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit without the cooperation of man” (Ott, 220).

1. Isaiah 7:14 (Immanuel Prophecy) – Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman’u-el (which means God with us).
2. Matthew 1:18 – Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, **before they came together** she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit.
3. Objection – Isn’t Joseph Jesus’s father? – Yes, Joseph is the foster father of Christ and legal guardian. There is a beautiful description of his role in the litany of St. Joseph where among other things Joseph is referred to as the:
 - a. Spouse of the Mother of God
 - b. Chaste guardian of the Virgin
 - c. Foster father of the Son of God
 - d. Diligent protector of Christ

III. Virginity During the Birth of Jesus – “Mary bore her Son without any injury to her virginal integrity” (Ott, 222).

1. Genesis 3:16 – “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children”
2. The Virgin Mary’s Painless Birth
 - a. Pope St. Leo the Great – “She (Mary) brought Him forth without the loss of virginity, even as she conceived him without its loss . . . (Jesus Christ was) born from the Virgin's womb because it was a miraculous birth.”
 - b. *Catechism of the Council of Trent* – “As the Conception itself transcends the order of nature, so the birth of our Lord presents to our contemplation nothing but what is divine . . . He is born of

His Mother without any diminution of her maternal virginity . . . ***Jesus Christ come forth from His mother's womb without injury to her maternal virginity***" (Part I, Article III; cf. CCC 499).

IV. Virginity After the Birth of Jesus – “After the Birth of Jesus Mary remained a Virgin” (Ott, 223).

1. Protestant Objections: Modern Protestants object to this dogma often, but the early Protestants like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli resolutely held to her perpetual virginity.
2. Why do we believe in the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin?
 - a. Jesus’s Had Siblings? – There are about ten instances in the New Testament where “brothers” and “sisters” of the Lord are mentioned (Matt. 12:46; 13:55; Mark 3:31–34; 6:3; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12; 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5).
 - i. Response: No, the term brethren as it is used in the New Testament does not imply that he had siblings; rather, the term designates any close relation like an uncle, cousin, etc.
 - b. Objection – Luke 2:7 says that Mary “brought forth her first-born son.” – Doesn’t that imply she had more children?
 - i. Response: No, the term “first-born son” in Jewish culture indicates that the child has special privileges and duties, not that his parents had children after him.
 - c. Mary Took Oath of Vow of Perpetual Virginity
 - i. And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no husband?”
 - ii. St. Thomas Aquinas explains that it is “the commonly accepted teaching that the Blessed Virgin had taken a vow of perpetual virginity” (Garrigou-Lagrange, 98; *ST* IIIa, q. 28, a. 4).
 - d. Christ gave his mother to the protection of the Disciple John
 - i. John 19: 26-27 – When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.
 - ii. If Jesus had biological siblings, then Jesus would have entrusted Mary to them as is keeping with Jewish custom. Instead he entrusted her to his “beloved disciple.”

V. Application – Mary, Mother of All Men

1. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains the following regarding this passage: “Tradition has always understood the words in that sense; they do not refer to a grace peculiar to St. John alone, but go beyond him to all who are to be regenerated by the Cross . . . Mary continues to exercise her mother functions in our regard by watching over us so that we grow in charity and persevere in it, by interceding for us and by distributing to us all the graces we receive” (155-156).
2. October Monthly Challenge: Call Your Mother – A Decade of the Rosary

- a. Pray the Morning Offering of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and read your Bible.
- b. Pray a decade of the Rosary

Episode #8 – Mary, Assumed into Heaven

I. Introduction – Did the Blessed Virgin Mary die?

1. Ludwig Ott – Mary suffered a temporal death . . . the fact of her death is almost generally accepted by the Fathers and Theologians, and is expressly affirmed in the Liturgy of the Church (Ott, 224).
2. Prayer at the Feast of the Dormition of Mary: “May the prayer of the Mother of God assist Thy people, O Lord: and although we know she has passed from the condition of the flesh, may we experience her interceding for us in Thy presence in the heavenly glory.”
3. “For Mary, death, in consequence of her freedom from original sin and from personal sin, was not a consequence of punishment of sin (cf. DH 1973). However, it seems fitting that Mary’s body, which was by nature mortal, should be, ***in conformity with that of her Divine Son***, subject to the general law of death” (Ott, 225).
4. Mary is Our Model
 - a. *Treatise on the Love of God* by St. Francis de Sales – “The Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, died of love for her Son . . . It is impossible to conceive of her death as having been anything except a death of love, which is the most noble of all deaths and a fitting crown of the most noble of all lives.”
 - b. Matthew 16: 24 – “Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

II. The Bodily Assumption of Mary into Heaven

1. Pope Pius XII (1946) – “We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a 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 into glory” (DH 3903).
2. Why would Mary be assumed into heaven?
 - a. Freedom from Sin – The Blessed Virgin was free from all sin, so it is fitting that she would be exempted from the full consequences of sin.
 - b. Motherhood of God – As his mother, it is fitting that she would share in the lot of her Son who was raised bodily from the dead.
 - i. The Ark of the Old Covenant – God was very specific about every exact detail of the ark (Exodus 25-30). It was a place where God himself would dwell (Exodus 25:8 – And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.).
 - ii. Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant
 1. Psalm 132:8 – Arise, O Lord, and go to thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy might.

2. Revelation 11:19 – Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple

III. The Queenship of Mary

1. Ludwig Ott – “After being assumed into Heaven and being raised above all angels and saints, Mary reigns with Christ, her Divine Son. . . . Mary’s right to reign as Queen of Heaven is a consequence of her *Divine Motherhood* . . . [and] on her *intrinsic connection with Christ in His work of Redemption*” (emphasis his, 228).
2. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “Mary’s queenship is truly universal. There is no region to which it does not extend in some way” (203). Mary exercises her queenship:
 - a. On earth by dispensing graces, by giving a good example of all the virtues, and by enlightening the apostles and us (Lourdes, La Salette, and Fatima).
 - b. In Heaven by communicating Christ’s light and glory to the angels and saints and by manifesting Christ’s plan for the extension of His Kingdom.
 - c. In purgatory when she prompts the faithful on earth to pray for the souls there and offer Masses for them.
 - d. And over the demons too because they are obliged to recognize her power.

IV. Application

1. Christ our King, Mary our Queen – Men, you need to meditate on the fact that we have a king and a queen. I have encouraged you all to remind yourself often that the Blessed Virgin Mary is your mother, and you are her son. Like any good mother, she is gentle and meek and loving. But she is also our queen. Our devotion to the Blessed Virgin should not be overly sentimental. We are her sons, but she wants us to become men.
2. In Ephesians 4, St. Paul urges us “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (1) and he says his mission is “building up the body of Christ (12) . . . to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (13).
3. The Church Militant, not the Church Impotent – By our baptism, we share in Christ’s threefold ministry of priest, prophet, and king. Are we exercising our authority in a way that honors our King and Queen?
4. October Monthly Challenge: Call Your Mother – A Decade of the Rosary
 1. Pray the Rosary
 2. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange – “A more simple and still more elevated way of reciting the Rosary is, while saying it, to keep the eyes of faith fixed on the living Jesus who is always making intercession for us and who is acting upon us in accordance with the mysteries of His childhood, or His Passion, or His glory. He comes to us to make us like Himself. Let us fix our gaze on Jesus who is looking at us. His look is more than kind and understanding: it is the look of God, a look which purifies, which sanctifies, which gives peace. It is the look of our Judge and still more the look of our Saviour, our Friend, the Spouse of souls. A Rosary said in this

way, in solitude and silence, is a most fruitful intercourse with Jesus. It is a conversation with Mary too which leads to intimacy with her Son” (248).