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Queen of Heaven

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Welcome to Queen of Heaven

In 2016, Saint Benedict Press released *Doors of Mercy*, a parish and home study program that offered participants a whirlwind tour of salvation history and highlighted the depths of God's mercy. It also introduced you to a humble Polish nun named Maria Faustina Kowalska and the Divine Mercy message and devotion.

But *Doors of Mercy* was only the beginning.

The next journey we are embarking on is a deeper encounter with our mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. While all Catholics know and honor her, *Queen of Heaven* will introduce you to her in a fuller, more intimate way.

The central goal of this program is to draw you closer to your heavenly mother. We will do this not only by teaching you about common devotional practices that Catholics have incorporated into their daily lives for centuries but also by telling you her story, the *complete* story.

Queen of Heaven will take you back into the distant reaches of time, before creation itself, and explore the Church's teaching of Mary as "the predestined mother," before embarking on a trip through Sacred Scripture and the often-sorrowful path she traveled with her Son. After reviewing her assumption into heaven, we will examine her role in the early Church and the development of the great Marian dogmas before leaping into some of her best-known apparitions—when she left her throne and returned to call us back to God.

Amidst all this, we will explore the battle she has waged against the Devil, showing you the fulfillment of the prophecy from the Garden that enmity would be placed between the woman and the serpent. It is a battle she has fought for the world, for humanity, and for you.

It is our hope and prayer that this program, whether you enjoy it at home or in your parish, will give you a deeper understanding of the Blessed Virgin Mary and enkindle in your heart a deeper love for your heavenly mother.

Conor Gallagher, Publisher



nd a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God.

-Revelation 12:1-6



QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Mary's Battle for You



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UNDERSTANDING YOUR GUIDE



What's inside your Queen of Heaven Study Guide? Here's an overview.

The Study Guide is divided into eight lessons. The following elements appear in each of them.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

It will be helpful to read this short passage before embarking on each lesson.

LESSON READINGS

Each lesson is drawn from various sources, from Scripture passages and teachings found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to the many books and articles that have been written about Mary's role in the Church and the amazing accounts of her apparitions. Suggested readings from these sources are to be read before embarking on each lesson. These readings are optional but will better prepare you for the material. The scriptural texts quoted in the *Study Guide* and *Leader Guide* come from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSVCE) translation of the Bible. Be aware that the wording of the biblical text will vary in other translations.

OPENING & CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer should be an integral part of every aspect of our lives, especially when we embark on a study of our mother, Mary. We ask God for the knowledge, wisdom, diligence, and humility necessary to understand His Word and for the grace to change our lives by responding in faith and obedience to what He says.

The Opening Prayer is for the group to pray together. We begin each session with a special prayer to Our Lady, invoking her intercession in our study and our lives. We've selected special prayers from the rich treasury the Church offers us. These are prayers gathered from sources originating throughout various centuries as ways to help us speak with our Blessed Mother.

When completing the session, close with the *Memorare*, one of the most famous Marian prayers used by the Church. It is an ancient prayer asking for Mary's intercession and reminds us that she can never turn down one of her children when they approach her with a sincere heart. Ending with this prayer will send you back out into the world with your spiritual mother watching over you.



VIDEO LESSON: QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Embark on the first video, *Queen of Heaven*, hosted and narrated by Leonardo Defilippis, with expert commentary from over a dozen Catholic scholars, authors, and speakers. This part of the study takes you on a journey through history alongside Mary, beginning before time itself and extending into today. Key highlights are provided with room to take notes, which will help you with the group discussion that follows.

KEY WORDS & PEOPLE TO KNOW

Each lesson contains several terms and people that are helpful to know and review.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

If your study has ten or more participants, you may hold discussions in smaller groups of five to seven. Each small group will have its own discussion leader prepared to guide the group. The small group discussion for each lesson will respond to two sets of questions: "Lesson Review" and "Life Application."

PART I: LESSON REVIEW

These questions prompt you in two ways: First, the questions help you recall some of the insights you have learned in reading the scriptural passage and the study notes. Second, the questions help you reflect more deeply by considering some wider issues raised by what you have learned.

PART II: LIFE APPLICATION

These questions are posed to help you consider how you might nurture your relationship with Mary and allow her to draw you closer to her Son. They will prompt you to discuss Mary's role in your salvation and the many ways you might show your love for her in your everyday life. After this discussion, you will be able to consider your answers in light of the insights provided by the Spiritual Life Video.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE VIDEO

After returning from your break, you'll watch this second video hosted by Fr. Patrick Winslow, who gives a short pastoral talk on Mary and the role she plays in your salvation, as well as the many ways you can show your love for her through common forms of devotion and veneration. Additionally, our expert commentators will speak on their own relationship with Mary and share personal testimonies on these devotional practices, including the Rosary, pilgrimages, sacred images, Marian consecration, and more.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

This passage should be read after watching the Spiritual Life Video. It helps reaffirm the lesson and leads you to the "Living It Out" portion of the session.

Study Guide

LIVING IT OUT

This section provides a brief period to pray, discern, and write down the specific ways you can nurture your relationship with Mary and discover how she can draw you closer to her Son.

BRINGING IT HOME

Each lesson contains a short summary looking back at the part of the story you have just covered and looking ahead to what awaits you in the next session.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Spread throughout each lesson are various quotations and excerpts to help you understand Mary's role in the Church and our lives. These include:

- **God's Word:** Scripture passages from the key moments of each session.
- **From the Catechism:** Supporting passages from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- **Saints on Mary:** Quotes from these holy men and women of the Church.
- **The Popes Teach:** Helpful insights and inspirational messages from encyclicals, homilies, and books written by the popes throughout the ages.

FURTHER READING

Each lesson contains a list of other titles that you can read to further your knowledge of Mary's life and come to know her better.



GROUP STUDY SESSION PLAN



What does a typical study session look like? Here's an overview.

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Review your **Living It Out** section from the prior lesson to consider the ways you deepened your relationship with Mary (will not apply for Lesson 1).
- Review the optional **Lesson Readings** section.
- Read the **Lesson Introduction**.

SESSION

- Opening Prayer
- Queen of Heaven Video—hosted and narrated by Leonardo Defilippis
- Small Group Discussion

Part I: Lesson Review Part II: Life Application

Break

- **Spiritual Life Video**—hosted by Fr. Patrick Winslow with personal testimonies from Catholic scholars and experts
- The Spiritual Life
- Living It Out
- Bringing It Home
- Closing Prayer

AFTER THE SESSION

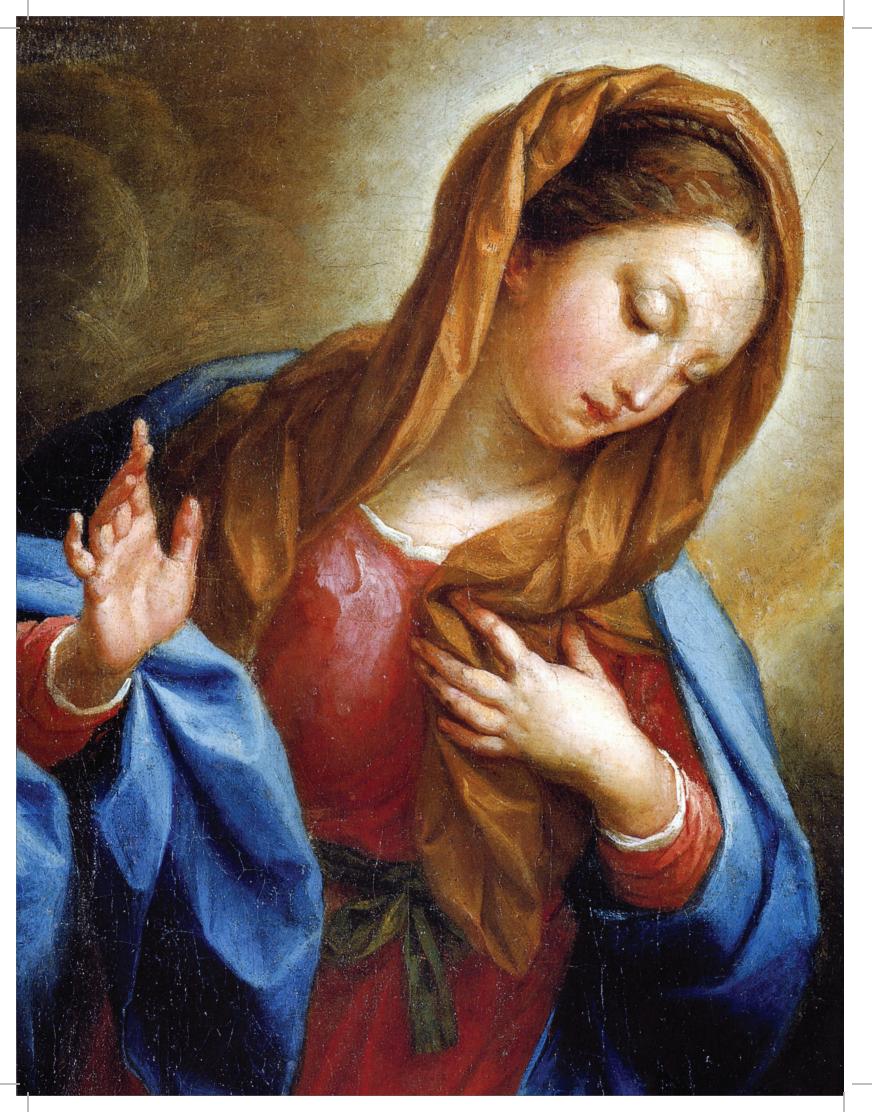
- Review the self-study material, including **Key Words & People to Know, Words of Wisdom**, and **Further Reading**.

MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

At the beginning of the first group session of *Queen of Heaven*, you'll have the opportunity to review "My Personal Checklist: Before the Study" (p. 13), which is a list of some personal benefits that we hope you will receive through this experience. You'll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page.

At the end of the last lesson, you'll have the opportunity to review "My Personal Checklist: After the Study" (p.131) so you can reflect on the areas in which you have grown personally through the study. You'll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page.

*Both of these checklists are for your use only; they will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.



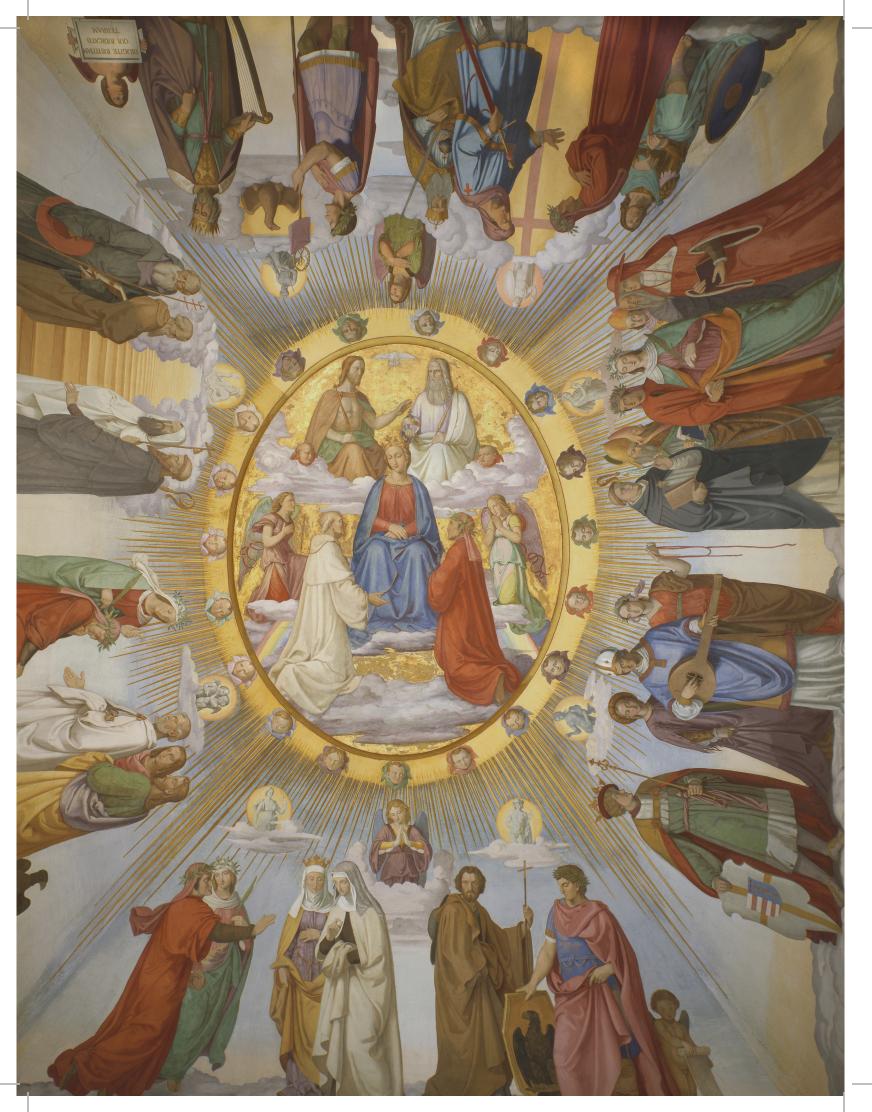
MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

Before the Study



Here are some personal benefits you can receive through the time and focus you invest in *Queen of Heaven*. Check all those you hope to receive. At the end of the study, you'll have a chance to review the list again to reflect on the areas in which you've grown.

*T	his checklist is for you only; it will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.
	☐ I want to know Mary more personally and intimately.
	☐ I want to become more familiar with the larger plan God has for Mary.
	☐ I want to understand better how Our Lady leads us to Jesus.
	☐ I'd like to know how to nurture my relationship with my spiritual mother.
	☐ I'd like to have a more maternal love and caring presence in my life.
	☐ I'm intrigued to know more about Mary's pivotal role in history.
	☐ I'd like to understand why Mary is often shown crushing the head of the serpent.
	☐ I'd like to know what it means to honor Mary as our queen.
	☐ I want to learn more about Marian devotions to devote more time to prayer.
	☐ I want to model my life more after Mary who said "Your will be done" to God.
	☐ I want to engage in more effective and powerful prayer, as well as spiritual intercession for others.
	☐ I want to learn to share my faith with those around me and with those who are most in need.
	☐ I want to be more grateful for the gift Jesus gave us in His mother.
	☐ I want to live my life in a way modeled more after the humility and obedience of the Blessed Mother.
	☐ I want to reflect Mary's loving kindness to those around me.
	☐ I want to learn from Mary's life of sorrows and the burdens she carried bravely and humbly so I can bear my own sorrows with more faith.
	☐ I want to know more about the Rosary and its power and benefits.
	☐ I'm interested to know more about the real story of Guadalupe, Lourdes, and Fatima.
	☐ I want to become a more active member of my parish to help build the kingdom of God



An Introduction to

QUEEN OF HEAVEN



The Life of Our Queen

No woman in human history has been more revered than the Virgin Mary. Devotion to her has blossomed in every corner of the world, perfuming the lives of the faithful with her maternal sweetness. We see her depicted in countless forms of art, find her honored in our shrines and churches, read about her in sacred literature and in the writings of the saints, name our children after her, and often discover her in the most serene corners of our hearts.

But the wonder of Our Lady and her story can be taken for granted if we are not careful. If we read a book about her only once in a while, or learn about one of her apparitions in passing, or utter a Hail Mary only when we feel that the Spirit moves us, we will miss the full picture of who she was and who she still is. We must step back to comprehend fully her role in our salvation—or rather, we must step *up*, and view her

Mary is alive, a queen enthroned next to her Son, shaping history also as the Mother of the Church.

life from the perspective of the eternal. We must, as much as we are able, attempt to see Mary through God's eyes. In doing this, we will witness Our Lady's entire story, which began in the distant reaches of the time before time and extends to the present day.

Queen of Heaven: Mary's Battle for You paints a portrait of the Virgin Mother that has never before been painted on one canvas. It takes centuries of Church teaching, biblical commentary, private revelation, history-altering apparitions, and theological study and threads them together into a biography of the most famous woman in human history. Here you find a wide-sweeping and epic narrative of the life of Mary, allowing study participants to understand her role in our salvation as never before.

But *Queen of Heaven* does not just detail the life of the young woman who walked the dusty hills and plains of Nazareth, for her life did not end when she was assumed into heaven. Just as Jesus Christ is risen and is the Lord of History, ruling through His Church, so too Mary is alive, a queen enthroned next to her Son, shaping history also as the Mother of the Church. We will soon discover that at the most pivotal moments in history, our queen left her throne to return to us, to intervene and turn humanity back toward her Son.



This program is meant above all to encourage devotion to Our Lady. But in addition to inspiring you and educating you in Mary's role in salvation history, *Queen of Heaven* also gives practical advice on nurturing your relationship with your spiritual mother. No participant will walk away without a richer love and understanding of this woman who became the Queen of Heaven!

The Battle for You

"I will put enmity between you and the woman" (Gn 3:15). These words from the Garden of Eden, the first words of what is known as the protoevangelium, serve as a war cry that echoes throughout all history. It is an echo we still hear today, perhaps louder than ever.

Darkness and light, sin and grace—perpetually they are at odds with one another, battling both within the hearts of men and women and between the powerful nations that rule the world. At the center of it all, we find the angel who said "no" and the woman who said "yes."

Queen of Heaven is much more than just a biography of Our Lady. It will give you a new perspective on the battle between Mary and the Devil. We will pull you back into the time before time, giving a unique and fascinating perspective that hints at the role Mary might have played in spurring the rebellion of Lucifer. The program then runs quickly through the

Old Testament, showing both the fore-shadowings of the woman from the *protoevangelium*, as well as detailing the many victories of the Devil after he corrupted our first parents.

And then *she* came along, the one undefiled. Not just a foreshadowing but the historical Mary of Nazareth. Her *fiat* gave flesh to the Word, and though the gates of heaven were opened through His death

Darkness and light, sin and grace perpetually they are at odds with one another.

and resurrection, the battle with the evil one would continue to rage. After an examination of Mary's life in Scripture, where she traveled down a path of sorrow, the program takes you on a whirlwind tour of Church history, showing how Mary interceded for us at our most pivotal moments, when it seemed the darkness was so close to overtaking us.

When an ancient heresy was spreading across Europe, she encouraged St. Dominic to preach on her Rosary to conquer the heretics, and conquer he did. When the Ottoman Empire threatened all of Christendom, she delivered victory at Lepanto. When the demonic practice of human sacrifice gripped a continent, she appeared on a hillside in Guadalupe and ushered in the largest mass conversion in the history of the Church.

When the French Revolution posed a deathly threat to the Church in France, she visited a young girl named Bernadette and called herself the Immaculate Conception. When she saw the threat of atheistic communism on the horizon, she made the sun dance at Fatima and worked through a humble Polish man to consecrate the world to her Immaculate Heart. At each turn, when the Devil seemed to be on the verge of victory, it was Our Lady who came and crushed his head again and again.

Queen of Heaven will explore this epic war in great detail, giving insights that will inspire you and compel you to consider the battle between good and evil in a whole new way, a battle that rages now more than ever.





LESSON 1

THE BATTLE BEGINS

The Woman & the Serpent



I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Although it may seem as if Mary's story began in Nazareth, in fact it goes back even further . . . before history itself.

The events that transpired in the profound abyss before time as we know it are mostly a mystery to us. Divine Revelation and Holy Mother Church give us only hints and glimpses of these events. Yet some theologians and saints have provided fascinating speculations on what might have been.

In this lesson, we are taken back into the mysterious time before time, where only God existed, as a community of persons: the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We will learn how He created the angels and examine the reasons why some of them rebelled against their Creator. We will also discover the origins of the Devil's hatred of this Woman, following him into the Garden where he corrupted our first parents. After leaving the Garden, we will learn of the Devil's many victories found in the Old Testament. Yet within these sacred writings, we will also see foreshadowings of the Woman who would one day come to give birth to Our Savior.

LESSON READINGS

Reading these before each lesson is optional, but can help you better understand and prepare for the lessons.

- Genesis 3
- Revelation 12
- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 456–460, 488



OPENING PRAYER

Begin your first session with this prayer, evoking Mary as Our Lady, Queen of Angels, which implores her to command the angels to drive away Satan's evil spirits.

August Queen of Heaven!
Sovereign Mistress of the angels!
Thou who from the beginning
hast received from God
the power and mission to crush the head of Satan,
we humbly beseech thee
to send thy holy Legions,
that, under thy command
and by thy power,
they may pursue the evil spirits,
encounter them on every side,
resist their bold attacks
and drive them hence into the abyss of eternal woe.
Amen.



VIDEO LESSON 1: THE BATTLE BEGINS

It is now time to embark on the first lesson, hosted and narrated by Leonardo Defilippis. Key highlights are provided below with room to take notes for assisting with group discussion. See p. 134 for Video Lesson Notes.

⊹ The Ch ւ	urch has lak	oeled Ma	ry "the pro	edestined n	nother."	

+ Saints and theologians have pointed to God's revelation to Lucifer of the future Incarnation as one possible reason for his rebellion.

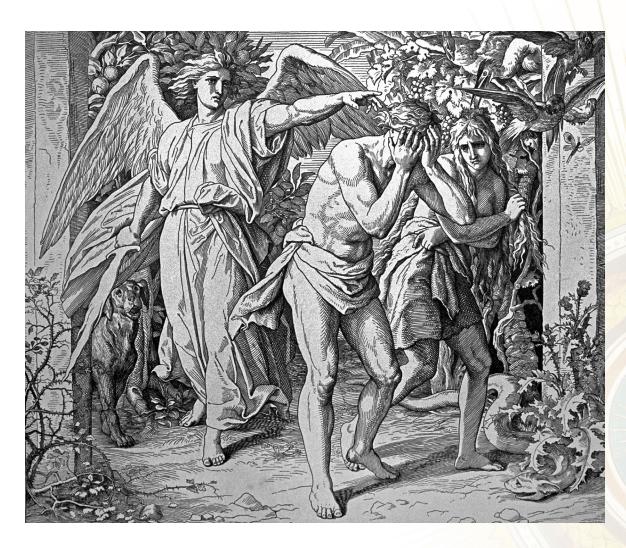
The Church teaches that the purpose of the Incarnation included more than the redemption of fallen humanity.

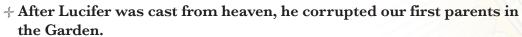
Saints on Mary

"When Mary . . . was raised to the dignity of Queen of Heaven, the power of hell over men was weakened and dissolved."

—St. Bernardine of Siena







Despite the sufferings and corruption of God's people, we see foreshadowings of Mary in the Old Testament.

KEY WORDS AND PEOPLE TO KNOW

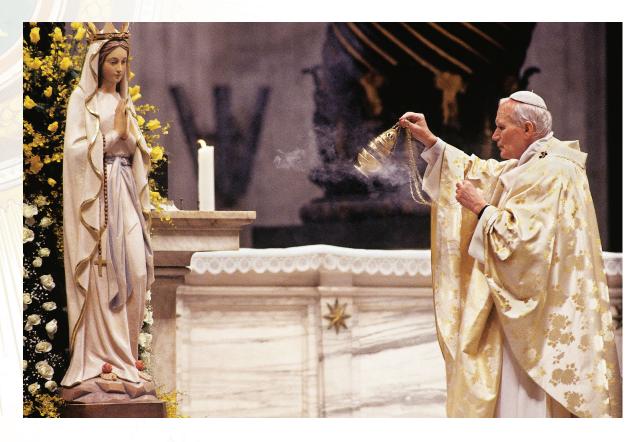


Lucifer – An angel who, as tradition tells us, was the mightiest and most intelligent of all God's angels. His name meant "light bearer," and he was known as the "Day Star" and the "son of Dawn" (Is 14:12). But in his pride, he rebelled against God and inspired other angels to join him. He and his cohorts battled St. Michael and other angels loyal to God, but they were eventually cast from heaven and brought their war to earth.

Enmity – A state of opposition to another; having hostility toward someone or something. We hear this word used in *Genesis* to describe the battle that would be waged between the serpent and the woman who would bring forth the Son of God.

The Predestined Mother – A term the Church uses to describe Mary in the Second Vatican Council document Lumen Gentium. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel" (*CCC*, 488).

Venerate – To show reverence; to honor and admire profoundly and respectfully. Veneration is very different from worship, which is due to God alone.



Type – A person, thing, or event in Scripture that foreshadows a later person, thing, or event in Scripture or in the history of the Church.

Cause of Our Joy – One of Mary's many titles, used in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Our joy is to be drawn into God's own life, invited into the communion of love that is the heart of the Trinity. The Incarnation is the means by which God made this invitation, and the invitation came through Mary. So she is the cause of our joy.



The Protoevangelium -Commonly known as the "First Gospel." It is the first mention of the coming Messiah, God's promise to send us His Son: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gn 3:15).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

PART I: LESSON REVIEW

1. Lucifer rebelled because of his pride, but what was it that wounded his pride? What have some theologians suspected was the catalyst for his mutiny?
2. What are some of the reasons the Church gives for the Incarnation?
3. Discuss the <i>protoevangelium</i> . What was this announcement, and what did it proclaim?
4. What is a <i>type</i> , and what are some examples of Old Testament types for Mary?

From the Catechism

"God sent forth his Son," but to prepare a body for him (Gal 4:4; Heb 10:5), he wanted the free cooperation of a creature. For this, from all eternity God chose for the mother of his Son a daughter of Israel, a young Jewish woman of Nazareth in Galilee, "a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1:26–27).

—*CCC*, 488

PART II: LIFE APPLICATION

In the second part of each lesson, we will explore common devotional practices that can help nurture your relationship with Mary and draw you closer to her Son. But in this lesson, we want to focus on helping you think of Mary as your mother. Only after igniting an internal flame of love for her can that love pour out into the external devotional practices we will explore later in the program.

1. Do you look to Mary as your spiritual mother? Do you turn to her every day for love

	and support just as a child turns to his mother? What in your life has blocked you from deepening your relationship with Mary? What has held you back from making her a part of your spiritual life?
2.	What negative things do you hear from friends, family, and neighbors about honoring Mary, and how can you help clarify these misunderstandings?
3.	What is the importance of the maternal and feminine nature of Marian spirituality? What unique qualities does Mary bring to nurturing souls?

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE VIDEO

After breaking from your Small Group Discussion, return to watch The Spiritual Life video where host Fr. Patrick Winslow and our expert commentators speak about loving Mary as our mother and ways we can venerate her in our everyday life.



THE SPIRITUAL LIFE: MARY AS YOUR MOTHER

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once asked, "Can religion do without mother-hood? It certainly does not do without fatherhood . . . and since motherhood is as necessary as fatherhood in the natural order—perhaps even more so—shall the devoted religious heart be without a woman to love?"

Archbishop Sheen goes on to reason: "If fatherhood has its prototype in the Heavenly Father, Who is the giver of all gifts, then certainly such a beautiful thing as motherhood shall not be without some original Mother, whose traits of loveliness every mother copies in varying degrees. The respect shown to woman looks to an ideal beyond each woman."

Mary is, of course, this woman Fulton Sheen spoke about; she is the "original mother," the "ideal behind each woman." As the Mother of God, she is also our mother. She brings a maternal quality to our spiritual lives, a nurturing love that fulfills an instinctive longing written on our souls by our heavenly Father.

Christ gave Mary to us as our mother while He hung on the Cross. When He saw her and John standing beneath Him, He said to her, "Woman, behold, your son!" and to John, "Behold, your mother!" (Jn 19:26–27). Here, He was not establishing a mother-child bond solely between Mary and John, but between Mary and all of us. Note that Scripture does not address John by name; rather, it says, "Then he said to the disciple." We are all called to be disciples of Christ, and so we are all sons and daughters of Mary who stand beside her at the foot of the Cross.

Think about the many things a mother provides for her child: the steadfast love, the tender care, the unquestionable support, the protective watch of her maternal eyes. Just as our mothers gave us all this in our childhood, Mary provides this for our souls throughout the entirety of our lives.

Soon we will explore the many ways we can venerate Mary and show our devotion to her, but before that, we must accept her as our mother. While exterior devotions such as the Rosary and the Miraculous Medal are important, our veneration must come from the heart.

LIVING IT OUT

Spend 3-5 minutes privately discerning specific ways God is calling you to nurture your relationship with Mary this week. Ask God, "What would You have me do this week? Lord, specifically what and when?" Listen carefully, asking the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart. Then write your plans below and carry them out this week. Share afterwards if you feel comfortable.

Help someone close to you deepen his or her relations	ship with Mary.
Begin a weekly or monthly tradition that will draw yo closer to Mary.	u and your family

The Popes Teach

At the dawn of the Creation, Satan seems to have the upper hand, but the son of a woman is to crush his head. Thus, through the descendence of a woman, God himself will triumph. . . . That woman is the Virgin Mary of whom was born Jesus Christ who, with his sacrifice, defeated the ancient tempter once and for all.

—Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus address on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2009

BRINGING IT HOME

Saints and theologians may speculate, but we will never know, this side of eternity, what happened in the time before time and what it was that made Lucifer and his cohorts rebel. On profound theological issues such as this, we have to rely on the guidance of Holy Mother Church.

What we do know is that God created the angels before the human race and that Lucifer, through his pride, inspired a rebellion. Additionally, we know that the Word became flesh not only to be the expiation for our sins but also so that we might know Him more intimately, have a model for holiness, and be invited to share in the divine life itself.

In light of these truths, we must focus on the woman—the one the Church calls the predestined mother—who was the means by which the Word took flesh. She is the Mother of God, and therefore our queen. The Devil hates her more than any other of God's creatures precisely because she gave flesh to God and brought about the means of our salvation. In our next session, we will examine this most profound moment when God came among us, the event we call the Annunciation.



God's Word

Behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth.

-Revelation 12:3-4

CLOSING PRAYER

The Memorare is an ancient prayer directed to Mary, asking for her intercession. The word memorare is Latin for "remember." This beautiful prayer reminds us that Mary can never refuse one of her children who comes to her with a sincere heart. End each session with this prayer to help us remember her intercessory power.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,

I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.

To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,

despise not my petitions,

but in your mercy, hear and answer me.

Amen.

FURTHER READING

Fr. Pascale Parente, Angels: In Catholic Teaching and Tradition. Charlotte: TAN Books, 1973.

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