

Mary, the Mother of God: *Our Model and our Mother*

Program Overview

This week we will learn about Mary, the All-Holy, Ever-Virgin, Mother of God, exploring different aspects of the life of the Virgin Mary and how she is also part of our life in Christ. Our examination will be based upon Holy Tradition (i.e. the Scriptures, the Saints, the Councils, the Services) and also our traditions (daily life, piety, and conventional wisdom from Orthodox cultures) in order to know *about* her as a model of the Christian life and come to *know her* as our Mother.

Our devotion to the Virgin Mary comes from our holistic and correct understanding of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Since He is God's Son – very God from very God – and since she is His Mother, then she is the Mother of God. First among all of the cloud of witnesses of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, the Virgin Mary is still alive with Him in Heaven; she is still His Mother as she was on earth. Just as we ask for help from our parents, friends, teachers, so we ask the Virgin Mary who is our Mother in Christ to comfort us, strengthen us, and help us by her prayers. She uses her boldness as the Mother of God and as one who stands purely and humbly before Her Son and our God to pray for us. Just as St. Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Spirit, greeted the Virgin Mary, "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb", we continue with every generation of right-believing Christians to call her blessed (c.f. Luke 1:41-42).

Scripture in Tradition

The Holy Scriptures are the pinnacle of the Holy Tradition of the Church, but we, as the Church has done for 2000 years, look to other sources of Tradition for our theological knowledge. Before the books of the New Testament were written and canonized, the Apostles and early Christians lived, taught, and prayed according to the Apostles' Kerygma, public preaching, and the Church's intimate teaching which is preserved in the oral tradition. Indeed, just as there are many of Christ's works that were not recorded in the Gospels (cf. John 20:30), so also much of the wondrous history and teaching of the Virgin Mary, Apostles, and all the early Christians was not recorded in the Holy Scriptures, but was handed down orally for several generations until it was finally recorded in texts that are now called *apocrypha*, or "hidden". Much of the Church's oral tradition is preserved in such apocryphal texts or other writings of the saints. Since these were written by saints under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Church recognizes them as reliable source of theology and history. We know that there are some illegitimate texts, which seem to be Christian, but being full of heretical teachings the Church has always rejected. We can distinguish the authentic Christian texts from the impostors by looking to the 2000 year continuity of the Church's acceptance of these writings and its teaching.

One of these books, the *Proto-Evangelium of James*, the Church has always asserted as an inspired source for history and theology. This "Pre-Gospel" is our most important record of the early life of the Virgin Mary and we rejoice in the wonderful details of God's care for us in the Coming of Christ in the flesh borrowed from Mary, the Mother of God and the Mother of Christians.

Telling Our Holy Stories

As you can tell from the outline of the curriculum below, the week is organized as a continuing story. Some of these stories are familiar to us, some are not. In order to tell these stories in a worthy manner, familiarize yourself with the Life of the Virgin Mary using the resources outlined below, some of which are included for your convenience, and all of which are easily available at the Church. Please continue this story into our own times and lives, sharing your own experiences with the Virgin Mary as your Mother in Christ. Tell these stories with a full heart and a full mind, as if they were your family's own stories – since they are – thereby inviting our beloved students deeper into Christ's Church with His Mother and all His Holy Ones.

Curriculum¹

Monday: A Pure and Holy Child (Icon: Entrance into the Temple)

- Old Testament Fore-Shadowings of the Virgin Mary (3), Conception (1), Birth and Childhood (2), Entrance into the Temple (3, 4)
- *Scripture of the Day:* Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son. (Is. 7:14)
- *Question of the Day:* Who are the parents of the Virgin Mary?
- *Announcements:* Memorization, Collection

Tuesday: Ever-Virgin Mother of God (Icon: Annunciation)

- Betrothal (5), Annunciation (6, 7, 8), Birth of Christ (9, 10, 11), Childhood of Christ (12, 13, 15, 16, 17), Contemporary Daily Life (14), At Cana [Jn 2:1-10], Preaching [Lk 11:27, Mt 3:31-35] (18, 19, 20)
- *Scripture of the Day:* Rejoice, O Full of Grace. The Lord is with you! (John 1:28)
- *Question of the Day:* What is the Annunciation?
- *Announcements:* Memorization, Dress for Liturgy, Bring Grapes...

Wednesday: Childless Mother (Icon: Transfiguration)

- At the Cross and with the Myrrhbearers (21, 22) (and John 19)
- *Scripture of the Day:* Woman, behold your son. (John 19:26)
- *Question of the Day:* Why did Jesus entrust His Mother to St. John's care?
- *Announcements:* Memorization, Collection

Thursday: The Mother of the Church (Icon: Dormition)

- At the Ascension (23), On Pentecost (24), In Jerusalem (25, 27), Visit to Mount Athos [Mt. Athos is still the "Garden of the Theotokos"] (26), St. Peter the Athonite seeing Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas speaking about Mt. Athos., Dormition (28,29),
- Blessing and sending St. Nino to go to Georgia (c.f. *Lives of Georgian Saints*, pg. 49-50),
- History of the Feast of the Protection of the Virgin Mary
- Celebrated October 1st, St. Mary of Egypt's encounter with the Virgin
- St. Romanos the Melodist given the Christmas Kontakion by the Virgin Mary
- St. John of Damascus healed by the Virgin Mary. (Dec 4th)
- Please use other miracles that you know of.
- *Scripture of the Day:* Whatever He says to you, do it. (John 2:5)
- *Question of the Day:* How is the Virgin Mary our Mother?
- *Announcements:* Memorization, Collection

Friday: Our Mother in Christ (Icon: Protection)

- Contemporary Miracles (*Grandmother's Spiritual Stories*) and other, Miracles that you know of, At our daily prayers, Compline Prayers, Paraklesis, Akathist, Prayers at the parting of soul from the body (*Books of Needs, in library*), St. Herman of Alaska's use of an icon of the Theotokos to stop a storm from overcoming Spruce Island.
- *Scripture of the Day:* For behold, henceforth all generations shall call be blessed. (Luke 1:48)
- *Question of the Day:* How can we be closer to the Virgin Mary?
- *Announcements:* Thanks

1 Numbers in Parentheses refer to chapters in the *Life of the Virgin Mary* from Holy Apostles Convent which (very thoroughly), in the Library, discuss the particular topic example and to the abridged text, with the same title, that accompanies this curriculum.

Regular Schedule (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday)

9:00	Prayers in Church
9:15	Classes Begin
10:00-10:15	Music for youngest group, in Class Room
10:30	Snack in Great Room
10:45	Classes Resume
10:45-11:15	Music for middle group, in Church
11:15-11:45	Music for upper groups, in Church
11:50-12:00	Prayers in Church, Announcements, Dismissal

Wednesday's Festal Schedule

9:00	Divine Liturgy, Blessing of Grapes and Fruit and Welcome
10:30	Brunch in Great Room
10:45	Classes Resume
10:45-11:15	Music for middle group, in Church
11:15-11:45	Music for upper groups, in Church
11:50-12:00	Closing Prayers in Church, Announcements

Friday's Schedule

9:00	Prayers in Church
9:15	Classes Begin
10:00-10:15	Music for youngest group, in Class Room
10:30	Snack in Great Room
10:45	Classes Resume
11:00-11:45	Presentation to Parents
11:50-12:00	Prayers in Church, Announcements, Group Picture, Dismissal

Extra-Curricular Activities

- Music - As usual, we are blessed with **Kh. Elizabeth's** musical direction and instruction, and Maria and Emily's assistance. These hymns will be performed during Friday's 11 AM presentation to parents and will also be helpful for participation in church, in youth choir, and throughout life. Also, the Youth Choir will be singing the Liturgy on Wednesday at 9 AM for the Sunday Divine Liturgy on the following Sunday August 10th.
- Memorization - Again, following **Kh. Joyce's** Pogram, the prayer memorization program will be in place again. Children will be given prayer books or booklets and have opportunities to recite their prayers immediately before and after the day's activities.
- Art - Our art project, facilitated by **Ephrem Acker**, will be joyful and engaging time for the kids to make a souvenir to remember the experience and knowledge gained in VCS.
- Snack - **Angie Draghici** will be providing our snacks this year.
- Collection - We'll be collecting money for St. Thekla Convent... as monasteries are gardens of the Virgin Mary.

Resources

<u>Resources</u>	PK1	2.3	4,5	6,7,8	Teen	Teacher Resource
<i>Mary, the Mother of God</i> , SVS Press, in Library	X	X				X
<i>The Incarnate God</i> , esp. vol. 1, in Lib						X
<i>Mary, Birth-giver of God</i> , by St. John of SF, Lib				X	X	X
<i>Proto-Evangelium of St. James</i> , Attached to Curriculum				X	X	*X*
<i>Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos</i> (Holy Apostles' Convent) 500 + pages. Thorough, detailed. In Library & BookShelf						*X*
<i>Life of the Virgin Mary</i> (attached to the curriculum) This booklet is an abridged version of the above book.						*X*
<i>The Illustrated Life of the Theotokos for Children</i> in Library and BookShelf	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Grandmother's Spiritual Stories</i> , in Lib and BookShelf by Georgia Hronas. Esp. Stories 8 & 9	X	X	X			X
<i>The Law of God</i> , in Lib, esp. NT ch. 1-10,58		X	X	X	X	X
Study the Festal Icons	X	X	X	X	X	X
<u>Activities</u> <i>Two of these will be presented on Friday</i>	PK1	2.3	4,5	6,7,8	Teen	
Coloring Feast-day Icons	X		X			
"Cartoon Strips" of Virgin Mary's Life	X		X	X		
Read and Discuss <i>Proto-Evangelium of St. James</i>				X	X	
Discuss <i>Sola Scriptura</i> & Orthodox Apologetics				X	X	
Study Festal Icons	X	X	X	X	X	
Put together a Skit		X	X	X		
Poster with Scenes from Her life		X	X	X		
Decoupage Icon	X	X	X	X		
Shoe Box Scene		X	X	X		
Poems, Songs, etc...		X	X	X		

* Highly recommended for background reading for teachers.

Glossary of Key Ideas

- *Theotokos* - Greek for Mother (literally "birthgiver" or "bearer") of God
- *Panagia* - Greek for All-Holy.
- Annunciation - the announcement of the Good News (Gr. *Evangelismos*), specifically Archangel Gabriel's announcing to the Virgin Mary of her conception.
- Ever-Virgin - the Church has always taught that Mary remained a virgin before, during, and after Christ's birth.
- Intercession - Praying for someone. Christ is our one and only Savior, but we help one another in maintaining our life in Him. Since all of the Saints are gathered around God's throne, undistracted and ever-worshipping Him, their prayers are especially powerful. The Virgin Mary, as the Mother of God and as the all-pure and all-holy, has a special boldness in her prayers for us.
- Worship vs. Honor - We only worship God but we honor and venerate people, icons, etc..
- Salvation - two meanings - Christ's Saving Work of Redemption (which even the Theotokos required) vs. the way that God can work through other people (the Theotokos, the other saints, priests, parents, friends, etc...) to assist us in starting, maintaining and deepening our life in Christ.

New Testament

Luke 1 & 2 and Matthew 1:18-2:23 - The Annunciation and Nativity of Christ.

Luke 11:27-28 ("blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it") in light of Lk 2:19 and 51 ("and Mary kept all of these things in her heart"). The Greek word *menoun* (a form of the conjunction *men*) has a meaning of correcting a previous statement and is more accurately translated as "yes, doubtless" or "yes, indeed".

John 19:25-27 "behold, your mother" (c.f. Gen. 3:20 Eve as mother of all the living)

Old Testament - Types of the Virgin Mary

The Holy Fathers, and Hymns that they composed, reference these Old Testament passages as being foreshadowings of Christ's Incarnation of the Virgin Mary. This is only a partial list.

Genesis 28:12-17 - Jacob's Ladder to Heaven

Exodus 3:2 - Burning Bush, that is burning but not burnt

Ex. 16:33 - Jar of Manna

Exodus 17:6 - Fountain Gushing from a rock

Exodus 25:31 - the Candlestick of the Light

Numbers 16-17 - Rod of Aaron - *Aaron's rod budded and bore almonds overnight as a sign that he was to be the priest for the Israelites. The almond represents Christ because of its hard and bitter exterior which is also nourishing. The Hebrew word for almond is "shaqed" which also means awake, because it is the first tree to awake to life from the winter. Christ, of course, is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

Judges 6:38 - Gideon's Fleece

I Kings 8:1-11 - Ark of the Covenant - *It seems that the Ark of the Covenant was lost, stolen or destroyed with Solomon's temple and was not in Herod's temple. Mary was present, though, in the Holy of Holies as the living Ark.*

I Kings 2:19 - Place of the King's Mother, or Queen Mother - *Solomon the Great rose from his throne and set a seat for her on his right hand. The King's mother had a special relationship to the king, of course. She was not just the mother of the king but she was also a venerated, respected, and much-loved advisor.*

Is. 7:14 - Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son...

Ezekiel 11:1 - Root of Jesse

Ezekiel 44:2 - Gate of Heaven

Daniel 2:45 - A Stone cut from the Uncut Mountain.

From the Holy Fathers

Mary's life is a rule of life for all - *St. Ambrose of Milan*

She was a virgin not only in body but also in mind, who never stained the genuine disposition of her virginity with guile. - *St. Ambrose of Milan*

Having woven the fleshly garment of the Word, thou [Mary] hast covered up the nakedness of the first-formed. - *St. Photios the Great*

If anyone does not accept the holy Mary as Theotokos, he is without the Godhead. - *St. Gregory the Theologian*

It is with justice and truth that we call the Holy Mary Theotokos (Mother of God); for this name

embraces the whole mystery of the dispensation. - *St. John of Damascus*

Unless man were redeemed, it would avail him nothing to be born. - *St. Ambrose of Milan*

There is not a single person who is perfectly holy, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ - *St. Ambrose of Milan*.

She was a stranger to any fall into sin, but not a stranger to sinful temptations. God alone is without sin. - *St. Ambrose of Milan*

She is the true throne of the Lord, for where the King sits, there is His Throne. - *St. Gregory Palamas*

Despite the righteousness and the purity of life which the Mother of God led, sin and eternal death manifested their presence in her. They could not be but manifested... - *St. Ignatius Brianchaninov*

In becoming the mother of the Creator, she became the Mistress of all creation. - *St. John Damascus*

If anyone will not confess that Emmanuel is truly God, and that the Holy Virgin is, therefore, the Mother of God (Theotokos), inasmuch as she has born in the flesh the Word of God made flesh, let him be anathema. - *St. Cyril of Alexandria*

Mary was more blessed in accepting the faith of Christ than in conceiving the flesh of Christ. - *St. Augustine, commenting on Luke 11:27*

Where are those who say that the Lord appeared on earth in imagination only? Behold, even the breasts which He sucked as an infant bear witness. He blesses those who keep the word of God, not excluding His mother from that blessing - far from it - but showing that even she would have received no benefit from giving birth to Him and suckling Him if she did not also possess every virtue. - *St. Theophylact of Ochrid, commenting on Luke 11:27-28*

The festival [of the Annunciation] is the beginning of all the other festivals... for today the Virgin, on behalf of our whole race, is being betrothed to the common Lord. - *St. Photios the Great*

A virgin, the tree, and death were the symbols of our defeat... And behold, a second time, a virgin, the tree, and death; the symbols of defeat have become the symbols of victory. For Mary is in the place of Eve. - *St. John Chrysostom*

The Evangelist (referring to St. Matthew in 1:25 - "and Joseph did not know her until...") uses the word "until" not that thou should suspect that afterwards Joseph knew Mary, but to inform thee, that before the birth, the Virgin was wholly untouched by man. - *St. John Chrysostom (he continues by pointing out many places that until is used in a way that does not imply a change afterwards: Gen 8:7, Ps 89:2, Ps 71:7. St. Jerome also identifies more examples of this scriptural usage of until in I Cor. 15:25, Ps 122:2, and Matt 28:20)*

For though He is the Only-Begotten as regards His divinity, yet as having become our Brother, He has also the name of the Firstborn; that being made the first-fruits as it were of the adoption of men, He might make us also the sons of God. - *St. Cyril of Alexandria*

He did not pass through the Virgin as through a channel (a pipe), but was truly made flesh from her. - *St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

The Lord entered into her [the Virgin Mary] and became a servant; He Who Is the Word entered and became silent within her; thunder entered her and made no sound; there entered the Shepherd of All and, in her, He became the Lamb, bleating as He comes forth. - *St. Ephraim the Syrian*.

Mary kept the seals of her virginity - *St. Ambrose of Milan*.

She is, after God, the treasury of all blessings, of purity, holiness, of all the wisdom, the source of spiritual power and constancy. - *St. John of Kronstadt*

From the Divine Services

The prophets proclaimed thee in ages past, speaking of thee as the ark of His holiness, the golden censer [Hebrews 9:4], the candlestick, and the table; and we sing thy praises as the tabernacle that held God. - *Feast of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple*

In thee rejoiceth, O full of grace, all creation: the angelic hosts, and the race of men, O hallowed Temple and super-sensual paradise, glory of Virgins, of whom God was incarnate and became a little child, even our God Who is before all the ages; for He made thy womb a throne, and thy body He made more spacious than the heavens. In thee rejoiceth, O full of grace, all creation; and it glorifieth thee. - *Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great.*

Hail, Ray of the living Sun. - *Akathist, Oikos 21*

Awed by the beauty of thy Virginité, and the exceeding radiance of thy purity. Gabriel stood amazed and cried to thee, O Mother of God: "What praise may I offer thee that is worthy of thy beauty? By what name shall I call thee? I am lost and bewildered; but I shall greet thee as I was commanded, Hail thou that art full of grace." - *Little Compline*

O most glorious, ever-virgin, blessed Theotokos, present our prayer to thy Son our God, and intercede with him that through Thee he may save our souls. - *Little Compline*

Rejoice, thou who wast prefigured by the patriarchs. Rejoice, thou foretelling of the prophets. Rejoice, thou perfect scroll of the law and the prophets. Rejoice, O spiritual ark, raised on the mountains above the flood of mortality. Rejoice, O twig of the dove in the hands of Noah. Rejoice, O heavenly ladder, foreseen by Jacob... Rejoice, O sound of the prophet's words; rejoice, thou blest adornment of the Apostles' choir. - *Akathist of the Dormition (select verses)*

The Woman having, as it were, great authority over the Lord, her Son, persuaded Him to work a miracle. She also prepares the way for it, bidding the waiters of the feast to be at hand... - *St. Cyril of Alexandria*

Seeing that we have no boldness on account of our many sins, do thou beseech Him that was born of thee, O Virgin Theotokos; for the supplication of the Mother availeth much to win the master's favor. - *From the Sixth Hour*

9 Points of Interest

1. THANK YOU so much to our teachers and helpers and volunteers! May the work of your hands be blessed.
2. Please take a moment before each day at VCS to pray for your students. As teachers and helpers, your prayers are worthy and strong. Here's a sample prayer:
"O God, our heavenly Father, who lovest mankind and art most merciful and compassionate, look down with mercy upon these Thy students ____, for whom I humbly pray and give over to Thy gracious care. Lead them in the path of Thy truth and draw them nearer to Thee, that they may receive this instruction well and grow in a life well-pleasing to Thee. Through the prayers of the Most-holy Theotokos and of all the saints. Amen.
3. Try to arrive thirty or so minutes early for set-up.
4. Dress Code: Adults and Teens, please use your discretion for modeling modesty. Shorts are okay for students, but no "short" shorts.
5. Snacks will be provided by parents and served by volunteers. Since Vacation Church School this year falls partially during the Dormition Fast, please make sure all snacks on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, are without meat and dairy. Wednesday, the Great Feast of the Transfiguration, the fast is relaxed for fish.
6. Thursday is "Camera Day"
7. Supplies are available in the classrooms. If any additional supplies are needed, either purchase the supplies yourself (you may turn in your receipts for reimbursement) or notify Vera ASAP.
8. Memorization is a great habit and we will have plenty for them to memorize throughout the week. Children may recite their memorized prayers before 9 a.m. or after 12 p.m. Some students prefer arriving early for their memorizations to be heard.
9. An Offering Basket will be available daily. We will collect this year, again, for St. Thekla Monastery in Pennsylvania. Thanks for your generosity.

Basics of Classroom Management

Some teachers have asked about classroom management, so here are some foundational principals in classroom management. Approaching classroom management from the “top down” (i.e. considering learning outcomes first, and then determining disciplinary measures), can keep us focused and prepared.

1. Pray. Pray for the fruits of the Spirit to be manifested in your classroom, especially yourself.
2. Relax. Do your best but do not take yourself too seriously.
3. Be positive. Our children's interactions at Church should be as joyous and wonderful as possible since we are trying to invite them into a fuller life in Christ.
4. Be very well prepared with your lesson:
 - Know your Subject
 - Prepare and Set-Up any Materials beforehand.
 - Coordinate with your Helper *beforehand*, if possible.
5. Pace Instruction Appropriately for the Developmental Stage.
 - Use reasonable expectations of attention span and skills for your students' age.
6. Set the highest goals and strictest management you can maintain while remaining positive and relaxed yourself.
7. Preface Instruction by reviewing quickly but clearly some basic “unwritten” rules.
 - Follow Directions
 - Be Respectful
 - Have a Good Attitude
 - Be Ready to Learn
8. Use gentle, non-corporal, discipline:
 - Reminders,
 - Redirecting Attention,
 - Short Timeouts,
 - Not Rewarding Negative Behavior with Attention,
 - Complimenting the (good) Deed not the Doer,
 - Offer the class an Incentive for Accomplishing Goals. Examples:
 - Work Done = 10 Minutes of Free Time
 - Good Attitude = Game Time (Bible Pictionary, Charades, Logos Game, etc...)
 - In a worst-case scenario, a disruptive child can “help” one of the adult helpers until the day is over. Unless there is some grave danger, decisions will be made *after* school.