

The Woman: Take-Home 6

Session 6: The Virgin

What We Found

Two claims, kept distinct: the virginal conception (Jesus conceived by the Holy Spirit without a human father; Matthew 1:18–25), confessed by nearly all Christians; and the perpetual virginity (Mary ever-virgin, Jesus her only child), confessed by the Church as *Aeiparthenos* and held by the ancient Church, the councils, and even Luther and Zwingli.

Matthew's 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive' quotes the Greek translation Jews made two centuries before Christ; and the sign offered to the house of David was to be 'deep as Sheol or high as heaven' (Isaiah 7:11), a depth only Emmanuel reaches.

The 'brothers of the Lord' are kinsmen in Scripture's wide sense: the first two named, James and Joseph, are the sons of another Mary, whom Matthew names among the women watching the crucifixion (Matthew 27:56) and later calls 'the other Mary' (Matthew 27:61). Tradition has often identified her with Mary the wife of Clopas, who stood by the Cross in John 19:25. 'Until' (Matthew 1:25) asserts nothing about afterward (compare 2 Samuel 6:23; Matthew 28:20), and 'first-born' was a legal title held from birth (Exodus 13:2). Powerfully: from the Cross, Jesus entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple (John 19:26–27), an act hard to explain if she had other living sons, and one the Church has always read as confirming that Jesus was her only child.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JEROME

St. Jerome argues, in substance, that the Lord's 'brothers' are kinsmen, that 'until' and 'firstborn' assert nothing beyond the point they mark, and that the ancient writers of the Church bear united witness against Helvidius's novelty in defense of Mary's abiding virginity.

Against Helvidius (c. 383), summary

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AMBROSE

St. Ambrose teaches, in substance, that Mary is the east gate of Ezekiel's vision: the gate by which the Lord entered the world, which remains shut; her consecrated virginity is a sign of undivided belonging to God.

De institutione virginis (c. 392), summary

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE LATERAN SYNOD OF 649

Under Pope St. Martin I, the Church confessed Mary 'ever-virgin and immaculate': conceiving without seed by the Holy Spirit, her virginity remaining undissolved after the birth.

Lateran Synod of 649, canon 3 (summary)

Live It This Week

- Consecrate one concrete thing wholly to God this week and do not borrow it back.
- Read John 19:25–27 once each day, standing in the beloved disciple's place.

- Pray daily for one specific Protestant friend or family member, with thanksgiving for their love of Scripture.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"

Matthew 1:23 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read Galatians 4:4–7 and John 1:1–18.

Catechism references: CCC 496–501; 503–507