OPENING PRAYER

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

—Collect, Vigil Mass, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

INTRODUCTION

In this opening episode, Dr. Brant Pitre introduces us to the study of Mary in the Bible. Marian doctrines come to life when viewed in the context of Scripture as a whole. And not just to life, but to a robust life, as our eyes are opened to images, narratives, and prefigurements that we often pass over in our reading of the Bible. As we embark on this study, Dr. Pitre provides three guideposts for the journey: the foundation of Christology upon which Mariology rests, the use of typology, and the teaching of the Church Fathers. The use of these guideposts is exemplified as he dives into the first topic, which is Mary as the New Eve.

The Pieta by Michelangelo © Vitaly Minko/shutterstock.com
Many artists depict the Blessed Virgin Mary holding the Infant Jesus or show her at the side of Our Lord at important moments in his life. One of the most famous artistic representations of Mary is Michelangelo’s sculpture of the *Pieta*, which portrays Mary holding her Son after he has been taken down from the Cross. Why do artists so frequently choose to represent Christ with his Mother? And why are we so moved by these images?

Young children ask a myriad of questions. And their determined queries usually resist simple answers. Have you ever had to answer multiple questions in order to provide a satisfactory explanation of one topic?

Mary is a model for prayer. She ponders God’s work in her heart, and she stays close to Jesus and learns from him. What is a simple step you could take to make this time of study and prayer more fruitful?

How would your life be different if you never committed a sin?

**VIDEO**

*Watch the video segment. Use the outline below to follow along and take notes.*

I. Three principles for studying Mary in Scripture  
   A. Mariology rooted in Christology *(CCC, 487)*  
   B. Typology  
   C. Teaching of the Church Fathers—Marian teachings are not new
II. Jesus as New Adam (Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:5)—Jesus comes into the world to undo effects of the Fall and inaugurate a new creation as a New Adam

III. First Eve (Genesis 1–3)
   A. Eve called “woman” eleven times
   B. Adam and Eve fall together/cooperate
   C. Genesis 3:15 prophecy of the messiah—four characters: the serpent, the serpent’s offspring, the woman, and the woman’s offspring

IV. Mary as the New Eve (John 2:1–11)
   A. Mary called “woman” two times
   B. Mary invites Jesus to perform his first miracle; Mary with Jesus at the Crucifixion
   C. Mary is the mother of the offspring (Jesus) who conquers the devil

V. Mary as the New Eve (Revelation 12)—Just as the serpent (devil) and the child (Jesus) represent individuals, so too the woman must represent an individual (Mary)

VI. Early Church Fathers recognized Mary’s unique role; because of this unique role it is fitting that Mary be created without sin (CCC, 411)

Discuss

1. Was there a moment that really spoke to you in this presentation? Did you learn something new? What point or points might you share with others?
**Quotes, Tips, & Definitions**

Christology = theology that is focused on the Person of Christ
Mariology = theology that addresses teachings about Mary
MEMORY VERSE
“The Lord God said to 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

CLOSING PRAYER
Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bride adorned with her jewels.

—Entrance Antiphon, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

FOR FURTHER READING
Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah by Brant Pitre (New York: Image, 2018)
Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought by Luigi Gambero (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006)
Catechism of the Catholic Church, 356–384
Read Genesis 1:25–31. In each day of creation, God refers to what he has created as “good” (for example, on the fifth day in verse 25). Why does he refer to the sixth day as “very good”? What has been added?

How wonderful Eve must have been before the Fall! In the first creation account, we see she was created with Adam as the crown of creation, in the image and likeness of God. Created with a rational soul, our first parents were given the ability to know, to love, and to will the good. Before the Fall, our first parents enjoyed a state of original holiness and justice. They lived in harmony with God, each other, themselves, and the rest of creation.

Read Genesis 2:18–25 in the second creation account. How does the story build up to the climax of Eve’s creation?

Eve is literally a dream come true for Adam. He has looked for her among all the creatures and not found her. She is a gift that comes from God in a special way. Eve is a companion who understands Adam, for she shares his human nature. And yet she is different, alleviating Adam’s loneliness of life. How many times have we longed for someone who can understand us from within? The philosopher Aristotle refers to this yearning when he speaks of a true friend as “another self” (Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. 1, Ch. 4).

When Eve comes from Adam, the best kind of human friendship was established. Her creation from Adam’s side is an echo of divine love in the Trinity. Eve appears in the first chapters of Genesis as a heavenly gift and a queen. She is Adam’s beloved companion, intended to share with Adam the dominion over God’s good creation and the work of making the world flourish.
Interestingly, when Adam first receives her, he does not call her “Eve.” What name does he give her in Genesis 2:23, and why? Read Genesis 2:18–3:24. How many times is “woman” used to refer to Eve? How many times is “Eve” used?

Unfortunately, with the Fall, everything changed. Adam and Eve lost their state of original holiness and justice, resulting in the loss of God’s divine life in their souls. They also experienced disharmony with each other, within themselves, and with creation (see CCC, 374–379). Look at how Adam speaks about Eve in Genesis 2:23 and how peaceful they are with each other and God. Compare that to their anxiety later in Genesis 3:7–8 and Adam’s words in Genesis 3:12.

Adam and Eve were intended to work together. They had a royal mission as stewards or vice-regents of God’s creation. This mission rested on mutual support, but, in the face of the devil’s temptation, they failed to carry this out. Adam did not defend Eve, and Eve did not turn to Adam for help. She carried on the conversation alone and fell prey to the serpent’s lies. Then she invited Adam into the sin, which had disastrous consequences. Instead of conquering together, Adam and Eve cooperated in the Fall and were vanquished together.

The good news is that God had a plan of restoration: “I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). A New Adam and a New Eve are foreshadowed in God’s promise.
The beautiful chant *Ave Maris Stella* has the following verse:

*Sumens illud Ave*  
*Taking that Ave*  
*Gabrielis ore*  
*From the mouth of Gabriel*  
*Funda nos in pace*  
*Confirm us in peace*  
*Mutans Evae nomen.*  
*Changing Eve’s name.*

With pious punning, the Latin “*Ave*” replaces “*Evae*.” That is to say, Mary is the reverse of Eve. Her “yes” at the Annunciation replaces Eve’s “no” in the garden.

God’s promise in Genesis 3:15 that “the seed of the woman” would bruise the head of the serpent foreshadows a New Adam and a New Eve. As Dr. Pitre mentioned in this episode, Mariology is always tied to Christology. As Eve came forth from Adam, so the truth about Mary is always grounded on and related to the truth about Christ. Mary is the New Eve because Christ is the New Adam.

Eve’s title “woman,” which is often repeated in the first chapters of Genesis, will be a flag used in the New Testament to alert readers to the one who will be the typological fulfillment of Eve. In theology, a *type* is a connection between two biblical figures or stories that reveal further truth about both. Eve is a type of Mary, and Mary is the typological fulfillment of Eve.

Thus, the name “woman” is given to Mary at certain key moments in the Gospels. The first of these happens at the wedding at Cana. “And Jesus said to her, ‘O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come’” (John 2:4). While Jesus is definitely not showing disrespect to his mother, it is nonetheless unusual in Scripture for a son to address his mother as “woman.” Something is going on: Jesus is drawing attention to Mary as the New Eve. The first Eve invited Adam to commit the first sin, but here Mary invites Jesus to perform his first sign.
This connection is also apparent at the end of John’s Gospel where Mary is again called “woman.” Read John 19:19–30. What are the similarities between Christ and Adam? Where does the scene take place? Where is Jesus? What is he doing and for whom? Is there anything else you see that is Adam-like?

The Catechism tells us that the first sin of Adam and Eve was to let trust for the Creator die in their hearts (see CCC, 397). For Adam, this act of trust should have included his willingness to offer his life to defend Eve from the lying serpent. In Ephesians 5:22–30, Saint Paul tells husbands to “love [their] wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.” On the Cross, Jesus is doing Adam’s work, laying down his life to save his bride.

In the midst of his suffering, Jesus addresses Mary: “When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’” (John 19:26). At the very moment when Jesus defeats the devil, he once again refers to Mary as “woman.” Just as Eve was with Adam at the Fall, Mary is with the New Adam when Jesus defeats the devil in fulfillment of the promise that God made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15.

With her own silent suffering at the foot of the Cross, Mary once again gives her “yes” to God’s will and cooperates with the New Adam’s work of redemption. Here then is the reversal of the Fall. At this key moment, it is most fitting that Mary be at the Cross with Jesus, and that she receive the title of “woman.” Mary is the fulfillment—the woman Eve was supposed to be, and much more.

We should look at the inevitable crosses in our lives as opportunities to say “yes” to God’s plan in imitation of Christ, the New Adam. Ask Our Lady to help you respond as she did at the Annunciation and when she stood by Christ at the Cross as the New Eve.
In the beautiful opening of his Gospel, Saint John tells us, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father” (John 1:14). But in the opening chapter of the Gospel, neither Jesus’s glory, nor his mighty deeds of healing and miracles, have yet been beheld. All that changes when Mary makes a simple request of her Son.

Let the proud man blush to see the humility of God. Lo, among other things, the Son of the Virgin comes to a marriage; He who, when He was with the Father, instituted marriage.

—St. Augustine, quoted by Thomas Aquinas in *Catena Aurea*, John, ch. 2.

**LECTIO:** The practice of praying with Scripture, *lectio divina* begins with an active and close reading of the Scripture passage. Read the verse below and then answer the questions to take a closer look at some of the details of the passage.

*On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.” So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

—John 2:1–11
Who is in the scene? Who are the main protagonists? Who is doing the talking?

Look at Mary’s first words to Jesus, and to the servants. What expectation is in these statements?

As a result of Mary’s prompting, Jesus performs his first sign at Cana. How do the disciples respond to this sign?

What statement or event most surprised you? Why?

**MEDITATIO:** Lectio, a close reading and rereading of Scripture, is followed by meditatio, a time to reflect on the Scripture passage and to ponder the reason for particular events, descriptions, details, phrases, and even echoes from other Scripture passages that were noticed during lectio. Take some time now to meditate on the above verse.
In the episode of the wedding at Cana, St John presents Mary’s first intervention in the public life of Jesus and highlights her co-operation in her Son’s mission. . . . Turning to Jesus with the words: “they have no wine” (John 2:3), Mary expresses her concern to him about this situation, expecting him to solve it. More precisely, according to some exegetes, his Mother is expecting an extraordinary sign, since Jesus had no wine at his disposal. The choice made by Mary, who could perhaps have obtained the necessary wine elsewhere, shows the courage of her faith, since until that moment Jesus had worked no miracles, either in Nazareth or in his public life. At Cana, the Blessed Virgin once again showed her total availability to God. At the Annunciation she had contributed to the miracle of the virginal conception by believing in Jesus before seeing him; here, her trust in Jesus’ as yet unrevealed power causes him to perform his “first sign”, the miraculous transformation of water into wine. In that way she precedes in faith the disciples who, as John says, would believe after the miracle: Jesus “manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him” (John 2:11). Thus, Mary strengthened their faith by obtaining this miraculous sign. . . . With the expression: “O woman, what have you to do with me?”, Jesus intends to put Mary’s co-operation on the level of salvation which, by involving her faith and hope, requires her to go beyond her natural role of mother. . . . The episode of the wedding at Cana urges us to be courageous in faith and to experience in our lives the truth of the Gospel words: “Ask, and it will be given you” (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9).

—Pope Saint John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, 26 February 1997

Eve cooperated with Adam. Mary cooperates with Jesus. What is the primary way that Mary cooperates in Jesus’s mission?

How does Mary’s request to Jesus exemplify her courageous faith? How is God calling you to a courageous faith?

How does Mary’s faith beget faith in others?

**Oratio, Contemplatio, Resolutio:** Having read and meditated on today’s Scripture passage, take some time to pray—bringing your thoughts to God (oratio)—and to be receptive to God’s grace in silence (contemplatio). Then end your prayer by making a simple concrete resolution (resolutio) to respond to God’s prompting of your heart in today’s prayer.
As Dr. Pitre noted, Mariology is always tied to Christology. As Eve came forth from Adam, so the truth about Mary is always grounded in and related to the truth about Christ. The dogma of Mary’s Immaculate Conception rests, like every Marian doctrine, upon her relationship with Christ.

The *Catechism* teaches, “The Church interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original ‘state of holiness and justice.’ This grace of original holiness was ‘to share in . . . divine life’” (*CCC*, 375).

Just as Adam and Eve were sinless before the Fall, the New Adam and New Eve were sinless. It is no surprise to learn that Christ, the New Adam, is sinless. He is God after all. Mary, the New Eve, however, is not God, but it is fitting that she was sinless as well. Because of her role in Christ’s salvific mission, God chose that she be conceived without Original Sin.

This traditional and ancient belief of Christians was solemnly defined by Pope Blessed Pius IX in 1854 as the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. However, the Fathers of the Church attest to this teaching as early as the second century.
This Virgin Mother of the Only-begotten of God, is called Mary, worthy of God, immaculate of the immaculate, one of the one.

—Origen, Homily 1, c. A.D. 244

Only you [Jesus] and your Mother are more beautiful than everything. For on you, O Lord, there is no mark; neither is there any stain in your Mother.

—Ephrem the Syrian, Nisibene Hymns 27.8, c. A.D. 370

We must except the holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom I wish to raise no question when it touches the subject of sins, out of honor to the Lord; for from Him we know what abundance of grace for overcoming sin in every particular was conferred upon her who had the merit to conceive and bear Him who undoubtedly had no sin.

—Augustine, On Nature and Grace 42, c. A.D. 415

Mary’s conception without Original Sin accompanies and rests on the sinlessness of Christ, the New Adam and the Son of God.

The Catechism reminds us that in the sin of the Fall, “man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. . . . Seded by the devil, he wanted to ‘be like God,’ but ‘without God, before God, and not in accordance with God’” (CCC, 398). Mary’s blessedness, her repeated “yes” to God’s will, her preference of putting God first regardless of her own suffering, is a window into God’s design for each of us. God wants to make each of us a new creation, to pour out the abundant gift of his grace in our souls so that we too might live a life worthy of the calling we have received (see Ephesians 4:1).

In closing, reflect on Jesus’s words from the Cross: “Behold your Mother” (John 19:27). The dogma of Mary’s Immaculate Conception is a gift. God made Mary sinless to further show the beauty of his plan of salvation. Her trust in God, her total openness to him, her courage, and her pure love all point to Mary’s role not only as our mother but also as our model in virtue. From the Cross, Jesus gives this perfect mother and model to his beloved disciple, and to each one of us. How can you love her more and allow her to bring you closer to her Son?
Fra Angelico was a Dominican friar and early Italian Renaissance painter devoted exclusively to religious art. Between 1418 and 1436, Fra Angelico resided at the Dominican monastery in Fiesole, and it was here that he and his brother, Benedetto, took their first vows. While at Fiesole, Fra Angelico executed a number of works, including reliquaries, altarpieces, frescoes, and other paintings.
During his life, Fra Angelico painted several depictions of the Annunciation, some as altarpieces, as well as the famous fresco that appears on the staircase wall in the San Marco monastery in Florence (see Lectio: Prayer, Session 1 for a reflection on this version). The painting of the Annunciation for today’s reflection was painted earlier in Fra Angelico’s life and is the main painting in a chapel altarpiece in the Church of San Domenico monastery in Fiesole. The work’s predella (a series of smaller paintings along the bottom frame of the main painting) are scenes representing the life of the Virgin, including Mary’s birth, her wedding with Saint Joseph, Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the Birth of Christ, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, and the Dormition of the Virgin with Christ receiving her soul. The main Annunciation painting along with the predella, was purchased in 1611 by Duke Mario Farnese and is now in the Prado Museum in Madrid.

In this Annunciation, the positions of Mary and the Angel Gabriel, as well as the portico in which they reside, are nearly identical to the later portrayal in the fresco at San Marco. In this work, however, Fra Angelico has extended the left side of the image to include a garden from which a saddened angel, dressed in rose garments similar to those of the Angel Gabriel, escorts Adam and Eve as they are expelled from the Garden of Eden.

Look up Genesis 3:21–24. How are Adam and Eve dressed?

Adam and Eve are dressed in the rough, gray “garments of skins” that God made for them after they sinned. Adam raises his hand to his face, expressing his anguish at what he has done, disobeying God and eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In the upper-left corner of the painting, the hands of God reach out from the golden light of Heaven. A golden ray from Heaven stretches out across the picture, connecting the two scenes of the Fall and the Annunciation, the sin of the first, which made necessary the announcement of a Savior in the second. God’s creation, which groaned under the weight of Adam and Eve’s sin, eagerly awaits the fullness of time when God would send forth his Son and inaugurate a new creation. As the ray of heavenly light approaches Mary, the dove of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the midst of the golden light, ready to overshadow Mary at her “yes” to God’s divine plan of the Incarnation.

Each member of the Blessed Trinity is at work in bringing about the new creation—thus we see the face of God the Father above the center pillar of the portico, with the dove of the Holy Spirit just below in the ray of heavenly light, and the anticipation of the Son about to be conceived in the womb of the Virgin. With the inclusion of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden alongside the Annunciation, Fra Angelico recalls the first creation and reveals the advent of the new creation in Christ; he recalls the first Adam and Eve and reveals the advent of the New Adam with the New Eve’s “yes.”
One of the marvelous things about this version of the Annunciation is the intricacy and detail that Fra Angelico includes. The garden is filled with every kind of foliage—leafy trees, fruit trees, palm trees. Even the ground upon which Adam and Eve walk is strewn with countless small flowers. The setting of the portico in which the Annunciation takes place is simple, but even here we see such beautiful details as the floral engraving of the halos, Mary’s headband, and the detailing of the angel’s robes.

The gestures of reverence and humility that permeate the angel and the Blessed Virgin Mary draw the viewer into the dialogue of the Annunciation scene. Speaking of this particular work, the Italian Renaissance biographer Vasari says: “In a chapel of the same church is a picture from the same hand, representing Our Lady receiving the Annunciation from the Angel Gabriel, with a countenance which is seen in profile, so devout, so delicate, and so perfectly executed, that the beholder can scarcely believe it to be by the hand of man, but would rather suppose it to have been delineated in Paradise. In the landscape forming the background are seen Adam and Eve, whose fall made it needful that the Virgin should give birth to the Redeemer.” With such ability, Fra Angelico gave his brother monks, and us today, an image that leads the viewer from artistic admiration to prayer and adoration.
Take a moment to journal your ideas, questions, or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned in the text or the discussion questions. List any personal applications you got from the lessons. What challenged you the most in the teachings? How might you turn what you’ve learned into specific action?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________