

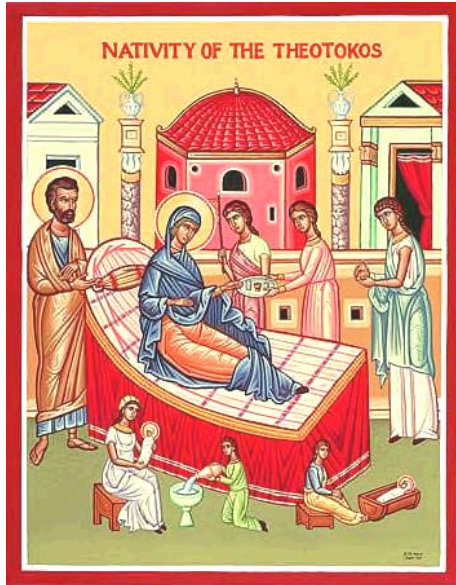
Why Jesus Had No Brothers

Overview

The controversy – typically from non-Catholics - about the issue of Mary's perpetual virginity is an old one. Excerpts from the bible have often been used to try to prove that Jesus had brothers and perhaps sisters.

The debate

Interestingly enough the debate upon whether Jesus had brothers or sisters actually provides the basis for the Catholic teachings of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Our Lady. The debate on this issue can be approached in several ways:



Technical & Historical Discussion

One approach is to look at the literal translations of the words of bible and determine what the words actually mean. In a few scripture passages, we hear reference to the “brothers” of Jesus. In the English language when we say, “brother”, we usually mean **full** brother - a male sibling sharing **both** biological parents. Nevertheless, the term has a broader range of meanings. It can include **half-brother** (male sibling sharing one biological parent), **stepbrother** (male sibling sharing one parent by marriage), and **adoptive** brother (male sibling adopted into the family).

The first Christians in Palestine, not having a word for cousin, would normally have referred

to the cousins Jesus may have had with such a general term and, in translating their writing or speech into Greek. In fact, there was no word for “cousin” in Aramaic – which was the language most of them spoke at the time of Jesus.

We know that John the Baptist was a second cousin of Jesus as the bible tells us that Mary was a “cousin” to Elizabeth. Yet, John is never referred to as being a cousin or a relation of Jesus because it was not important information to the biblical authors.

Biblical, Theological & Common Sense

In this approach, we read the bible for what it says and look for the passages that help explain what God meant. Catholic teachings are such that we are obligated to believe in Mary's perpetual virginity and we so express this in every Mass celebrated. The opening **Penitential Rite** contains the words “...and I ask the Blessed Mary, **ever virgin**, and all the angels and saints...”

In order for God to bring forth His only Son, it could not be in an unclean or impure way. Since humanity was tainted, Jesus had to be born of one who was without sin. In **Luke 1:28** the angel referred to Mary as the “*favored one*” and we also see this translated as “*full of grace*” – clear indicators of her pure state. The consequences of disobedience of our first parents were to become bodily mortal – including a loss of the perfect way in we were to procreate. **Genesis 3:16** gives us a hint at this awesome possibility when God tells Eve that she would suffer during childbirth – clearly not what God had intended for mankind in His plan.

In summary we can clearly see that Jesus was an only child and that He was such a special one that no other could come after Him.