

Who is Mary?

To fully know who Mary was is nearly impossible. Studies of the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of 1st century Palestine can provide a broad generalization of how she lived. Much of this knowledge is derived from historical research into the life of Jesus. The following is known of who she was.

- Mary was a typical Jewish Village women
- She was a peasant
- Mary practiced the Jewish faith, following the Hebrew Bible, containing the Torah (Also known as the 'Old Testament' by Christians)
- Mary was the mother of Jesus of Nazareth
- Following the crucifixion of her son Jesus, Mary continued to practice the Jewish faith. But, believing that the messiah had come, Mary can be coined by a term known as a Jewish – Christian

The Importance of Mary in Islam:

- In the Qur'an, no other woman is given more attention than the Virgin Mary. In fact, the nineteenth chapter of the Qur'an is named after her. Of the Qur'an's 114 chapters, she is among the eight people who have a chapter named after them.
- In Islam she is generally referred to as Maryam, Umm Isa (Mother of Jesus)
- Among the references to Mary within the Qur'an. One of these addresses the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, defined in the Catholic Church. The belief is that Mary and her son were sinless. This quality is also held by other prophets in particular Muhammed.
- For Muslims, the Virgin Mary is viewed as both an example and sign for all people.
- Mary is a spiritual figure in Islam who has a symbolic importance to men and women, both as an individual and together with her son Jesus.
- Often referred to as "Our Lady Mary – May the peace of God be upon her", by Muslims
- Mary is venerated in Islam for her qualities: Purity, humility, and her piety
- Although the Qur'an mentions Mary with respect, she is not seen as central, and Jesus is merely a prophet in Islamic belief, one of many preceding Muhammad.
- While it is not possible to say from Islamic references that all Muslims pay great attention to the Virgin Mary, she does have a place in Islamic tradition and within the Qur'an

The Importance of Mary in Christianity:

- Mariology is the area of Christian theology concerned with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It discusses her life, mostly her veneration mainly through Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Anglicanism, and her aspect in modern and ancient Christianity.
- Mary is referred by the following names
 - Mary, Mother of Jesus
 - Blessed Virgin Mary
 - Queen of Theotokos (Mother of God) - Orthodox
 - Our Lady
 - Notre Dame in French
 - Madonna in Italian
- Within the Christian tradition, Mary has been a figure having been a source of division and also a symbol of unity. Particularly, between Protestants who accuse Roman Catholics of having developed an un-Christian adoration and worship of Mary, by giving Mary a semi-divine status.
- Roman Catholics respond by stating that Mary was human and so is not worshipped, but is special before other saints, and therefore worthy of particular veneration.

- The feast of the nativity of Mary is celebrated in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican Churches on 8 September.
- The Orthodox and Catholic Churches also celebrate many other feast days in honour of Mary.
- In Catholic and Orthodox Churches, Mary is the pre-eminent saint and the focus of much popular devotion.
- Because of her humility, piety and role as the mother, Mary has been given respect in all branches of Christianity and is a common subject in art, music and literature.

The Importance of Mary in Judaism:

- The significance of Mary in religious doctrine is based on the importance of Jesus, her son and his significance within their religious texts.
- Judaism follows two main texts: The Hebrew Bible, containing the Torah and the Talmud. Mary is not mentioned within either of these texts, neither is Jesus explicitly named.
- Judaism does not recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Son of God)
- Since Judaism does not recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, rather only as one of the many candidate-messiahs who arose and made themselves saviors of Israel, the Jewish religion does not acknowledge the title of "Mother of the Messiah" for Mary, or that of "Mother of God".
- For Judaism, Mary is another Jewish mother of a son who was born under King Herod in Bethlehem in Judea and died under Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, who became famous for his popular preaching.

The Importance of Mary in Buddhism:

- Buddhism, does not evoke God, and therefore understandably has no reason to include a figure such as the Blessed Virgin Mary in the picture of salvation.
- As goes an ancient Sutra (sacred Buddhist text): "Like a mother loves and protects her beloved son with her very life, you too, Buddhist monks, must cultivate without limit the virtue of kindness and pity toward all living things."
- The concept of Kannon-Bosatsu (in Sanskrit: Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara) as the Mother Buddha - with boundless pity - appeared and expanded in Mahayana Buddhism (most common type of Buddhism in Japan, Korea and China).
- The devotion to Kannon-Bosatsu quickly spread throughout China, Korea and Japan. The numerous of temples dedicated to this Kannon has become popular destinations for Buddhist pilgrimages.
- This concept of the Kannon-Botsatsu (Mother Buddha) has qualities that remind us of Mary without being directly comparable to her.

The Importance of Mary in Hinduism:

- In Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Hinduism, we find similarities in the conviction that a mother was chosen and that the birth of her son was, out of the ordinary. In these cases the child — respectively the Bodhisattva, Zoroaster, and Krishna — predates Christianity. These stories are much different than any Gospel or apocryphal, account of Mary and Jesus, but do bare resemblances.
- Krishna is the second person of the Hindu Trinity. He is considered to be one of the incarnations of the God Vishnu. Some Hindus believe that he lived on Earth during the 2nd or 3rd century. Yeshua of Nazareth is generally regarded as having been born in Palestine. Thus, there are many points of similarities between the Krishna and Jesus.
- Since ancient times, goddesses have been both well known and revered in India.
- Goddess worship is very developed in Hinduism

- They are particularly associated with fertility – both of the crops as of the human – as well as illnesses.
- The concept of the Hindu goddess has qualities that remind us of Mary without being directly comparable to her.

Shrines throughout the world dedicated to the celebration of “Our Lady”:

- At Matariyya near Cairo is the tree where the Holy Family are said to have rested; Hammam Sitti Maryam (Bath of the Lady Maryam) is situated near St. Stephen's Gate in Jerusalem, and for many years was visited especially by women.
- Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico
- Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil
- Our Lady of Lourdes
- The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal
- Our Lady of Loretto in Italy
- Our Lady of Walsingham in England
- The city of Nazareth is the center of a universal Marian project
- Our Lady of Kibeho in Rwanda
- Our Lady of Peace of Yamoussoukro, Africa
- Our Lady of Africa in Algiers
- Our Lady of Lujan, patroness of the Republic of Argentina
- Our Lady of the Valley in Argentina
- The Virgin of Itati in Argentina
- The city of Buenos Aires official name is "Ciudad de la Santissima Trinidad y puerto de Santa Maria de los Buenos Aires", which means, "City of the Holy Trinity and Seaport of Our Lady of Good Air"
- Rosario, the second biggest city in Argentina, derives its name from Our Lady of the Rosary
- Our Lady of Velankanni in India
- Our Lady of Akita, Japan
- Our Lady of Lavang, Vietnam

Mary a Socially Adaptable Image:

- Theologians have noticed the similarities between Mary's life and the lives of many women in the world today.
 - Having a child under unconventional circumstances
 - Fleeing as a refugee with a baby to a strange land to escape military action
 - Losing a child to unjust execution by the state
 - Mary is a symbol to the marginalized women who live in oppressive situations
 - A woman and a her child outside a traditional patriarchal family structure
- Patroness and Artistic Subject:
 - Artistic representations of Mary are innumerable. She has been the subject of countless works honored in paintings, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry, venerated with her titles, liturgies, prayers, and feasts; and taught about in spiritual writings, theology and official doctrine.
 - With respect to the Immaculate Conception Mary is the patroness of the United States, and Our Lady of Guadalupe was declared Empress of all the Americas by Pope Pius X. With Lumen Gentium (1964), Pope Paul VI proclaimed Mary as Mother of the Church. In the 1980s, while it was still a part of the USSR, Pope John Paul II dedicated Russia to her.

Summary

Mary is an internationally recognizable symbol, with the following characteristics:

- Mother Figure
- Humility
- Piety
- Purity
- Gentleness
- Nurturing
- Promotes Unity, and Peace
- Strength
- Courage
- Sacrifice
- Earth mother
- Accepted across all cultures and religions

We can use the above to combat any negative religious over tones as most of these words above are not limited to Catholicism, or use this to create a new brand image per se. for the charity if needed.

The Qur'an (Koran) states that Mary was an "honoured servant", Catholics would agree, although elaborate that she was in fact divine. But since the former is a point where both faiths agree, we could elaborate that the meaning behind "Our Lady Queen of Peace" is a belief /commitment that the organization is; "honoured to serve children"