

of Simon and Thaddeus, and of one Joseph; Mary Salome, wife of Zebedee, mother of John the evangelist and James; Mary Magdalene. These four are found in the Gospel. James and Judas and Joseph were sons of an aunt of the Lord's. James also and John were sons of another aunt of the Lord's. Mary, mother of James the less and Joseph, wife of Alpheus, was the sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord, whom John names of Cleophas, either from her father or from the family of the clan, or for some other reason. Mary Salome is called Salome either from her husband or her village. Some affirm that she is the same as Mary of Cleophas, because she had two husbands" (*The Fragments of Papias*).

Rather than using the word "brothers" it would be more accurate to use the word "brethren." Any way you look at it, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had only one child natural child. The rest of us are her children by adoption.

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Pamphlet 333

The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus

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There is absolutely no historical evidence that Mary, the mother of Jesus, had other children. The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was a Virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus.

The belief in Mary's perpetual virginity (which necessarily includes her virginity after the birth of Christ) has been so deeply rooted in Catholic Tradition from the very beginning that the Fathers of the Church instinctively and vigorously rose to its defense every time early heretics questioned it. Among the many witnesses that could be mentioned in this connection are: Origen, St. Epheam, St. Hilary, St. Zeno, St. John Chrysostom, St. Epiphanius, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine and many others. The Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin also accepted the Catholic doctrine of Our Lady's perpetual virginity.

Mt.13:55, and Mk. 6:3 name the following as brothers of Jesus: James, Joseph (Joses - the manuscripts vary on the spelling), Simon and Judas. But Mt. 27:56, says at the cross were Mary the mother of James and Joseph. Mark 15:40 says Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses was there. So, although the proof is not conclusive, it seems that – unless we suppose these were others with the same names, that the first

two, James and Joseph (Joses) had a mother other than the Mother of Jesus.

Therefore the term brother was used for those who were not sons of Mary the Mother of Jesus. So the same easily could be the case with the other two, Simon and Judas.

Further if Mary had other natural sons and daughters too at the time of the cross, it would be strange for Jesus to ask John to take care of her.

The words “brother” or “sister” were defined by their use.

The Hebrew and Aramaic *ah* was used for various types of relations. Hebrew had no word for cousin. They could say *ben-dod*, which means son of a paternal uncle, but for other kinds of cousins they would need a complex phrase, such as “the son of the brother of his mother” or, “the son of the sister of his mother”.

Lot, who was the nephew of Abraham (cf. Gen. 11:27-31) is called his brother in Gen. 13:8 and 14:14-16. Certainly, the Greek language does have words for cousins and other relatives, but the Septuagint (the old Greek translation of the Hebrew OT -- abbreviated LXX) uses Greek *adelphos*, brother, for Lot - who as mentioned above, was really a nephew, so that objection doesn't prove the case.

Furthermore, the writers of the Gospels and Epistles often had Hebrew words in mind

when they wrote Greek words. This is especially true with St. Paul. And there is strong evidence that St. Luke at some points was translating Hebrew documents.

Mt. 1:25 – “but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus”. Non-Catholics like to point to two words here, “until” and “firstborn”.

Most ancient words have a broad span of possible meanings. Sometimes the word for *until* leaves room for a change after the time point indicated. However this was not always the case. In Dt. 34:6, Moses was buried, “and to this day no one knows where the grave is”. That was true in the day of the writer of Dt.; it is still true even today. In Psalm 110:1, as interpreted by Jesus Himself (Mt.22; 42-46), “The Lord said to my [David's] Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’” Of course, Jesus was not to stop being at the right hand of the Father at any point. So the word *until* here does not mean a change of status. Psalm 72:7, a messianic Psalm, says that in his days “peace will abound until the moon is no more.” Again, the power of the Messiah is not to stop when the moon no longer gives its light (Mt.24:29). In 2 Samuel 6:23 that David's wife Michal had no son until the day of her death. Of course, she did not have one after that either! In Mt.11:23, our Lord says that if the miracles done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, “it would have lasted until the present day.” Had it lasted, Jesus did not intend to destroy it in His time. In Mt 28:20, Jesus promised to be with His Church, His

followers until the end of the world, does that mean He will desert us in eternity. In Romans 8:22, St. Paul says that all creation groans, waiting for the revelation of the sons of God until Paul's day. Nor did it stop then, that will continue until the restoration at the end. In 1 Timothy 4:13, the Apostle tells Timothy to devote himself to reading, exhortation and teaching “until I come.” He did not mean Timothy should stop such things when Paul did come. There are more, but these should be more than enough to show that not always does *until* in OT and NT, mean a change of things is to come at the point referred to.

Jesus is called firstborn in Luke 2:7 (and also in Mt 1:25, if we take the Vulgate addition to the Greek). This reflects Hebrew *bekor*, which chiefly expressed the privileged position of the firstborn among other children. It need not imply there were actually others. We can see this from a Greek tomb inscription at Tel el Yaoudieh (cf. *Biblica* 11, 1930, 369-90) for a mother who died in childbirth: “In the pain of delivering my firstborn child, destiny brought me to the end of life.

There are no solid evidences in Scripture that Our Lady had other children. The decisive reason is the teaching of the Church. The most ancient creeds all call her *aei-parthenos* = “Ever-virgin.”

According to Papias [AD second century] – “Mary, the mother of the Lord; Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, who was the mother of James the bishop and apostle, and