Figure 2.10 shows a simplified block diagram of a microcontroller based on the ARM®Cortex™-M processor. It is a **Harvard architecture** because it has separate data and instruction buses. The Cortex-M instruction set combines the high performance typical of a 32-bit processor with high code density typical of 8-bit and 16-bit microcontrollers. Instructions are fetched from flash ROM using the ICode bus. Data are exchanged with memory and I/O via the system bus interface. On the Cortex-M4 there is a second I/O bus for high-speed devices like USB. There are many sophisticated debugging features utilizing the DCode bus. The nested vectored interrupt controller (NVIC) manages **interrupts**, which are hardware-triggered software functions. Some internal peripherals, like the NVIC communicate directly with the processor via the private peripheral bus (PPB). The tight integration of the processor and interrupt controller provides fast execution of interrupt service routines (ISRs), dramatically reducing the interrupt latency.

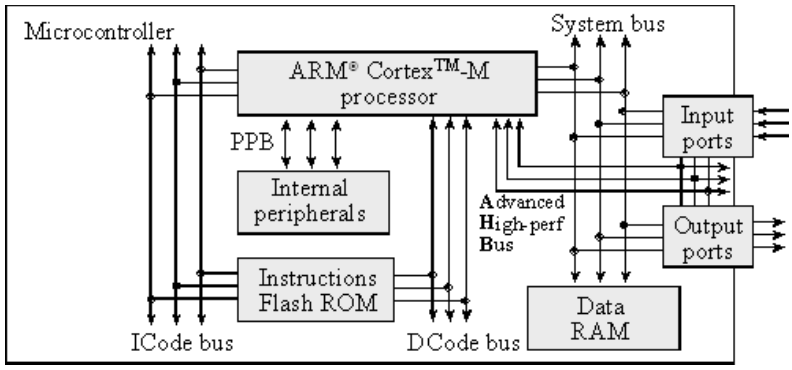

Figure 2.10. Harvard architecture of an ARM® Cortex-M-based microcontroller.

Even though data and instructions are fetched 32-bits at a time, each 8-bit byte has a unique address. This means memory and I/O ports are byte addressable. The processor can read or write 8-bit, 16-bit, or 32-bit data. Exactly how many bits are affected depends on the instruction, which we will see later in this chapter.

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