

A reflection on the Blessed Virgin Mary 14 August 2022

Luke 1.46-55 Saying yes to God

“I think you’ve made a mistake” said Mary as she stood open mouthed, hardly taking in what she was being told. Actually, Moses said something similar as he stood aghast at the voice that seemed to be coming from within the burning bush. “Not me” he said. The voice from God had asked him to go to Egypt to rescue his chosen people languishing in slavery. It was one thing to be asked to talk to Pharaoh about releasing the Hebrew people from slavery but what Mary was being asked to do was on a different scale.

As a good Jewish girl, Mary knew all about the promise that a Messiah would inherit the throne of great King David and reign over Israel for ever. But this Messiah would also be the Son of God and he would save his people. She knew all about that and yet now she was being told that she had been chosen by God to give birth to a baby boy who would be called Jesus and he would be this Messiah. She, Mary, giving birth to the Messiah. It’s just not going to happen – you’re pulling my leg, Mary might have said.

No wonder Mary was surprised. After all, she was a young girl maybe 15 or so, engaged to a young man and not yet married. But the angel is not put off. He goes on to tell Mary that she would conceive through the working of God’s Holy Spirit and that Jesus’ whole creation, and his very being were the work of the Spirit. Don’t worry, it’s all taken care of, says the angel.

And all Mary says is – that’s fine by me. Wouldn’t we all want answers to a whole list of questions? Why me? When will the baby come? What shall I tell Joseph – he’ll be furious? Shall I tell the priest at the temple? What do I tell my parents? What publicity will I get? Yet she asks none of these questions: she calmly accepts the call from God. Nothing else seems important.

Carrying the Christ child within her, Mary sings her song, the Magnificat. She declares that her whole being praises God. She is confident that God will restore order, will save the poor, will act with strength and mercy and will keep his promises. She declares the good news of God and models a new way of living. Bearing Christ didn’t just change Mary, it changed the people around her. Her whole life brought God into focus for others, showed others the glory and the majesty of the Lord. And Christ within each one of us should bring God into focus for others.

Perhaps we should look to the example of Mary for strength and guidance in these strange and difficult times. Mary was a young girl and yet almost without question she accepted the call from God to be the mother of God’s son. Mary was the temple of God’s Holy Spirit and we too, are called to be temples of the Holy Spirit, filled with vision and hope and channels of God’s grace.

Through Mary, Jesus came into the world and it is through us, through living out our faith in words and deeds that Jesus comes into the world today. That is what God is calling us to do. To follow the example of Mary and put our trust in God as she did. Mary’s message to us is

one of hope, encouragement and faith in a God for whom all things are possible. God wants to be with his people, us, and live among us in a new way.

In spite of the obstacles and objections that we might have, in spite of our shortcomings, God still wants us to be the place where he dwells; it is through us that Christ is revealed today. If we let God dwell within us, if we let him into our lives today and every day, then we will know his presence with us even in difficult and insecure times, even when we feel that life is too much, even when we feel alone. He will help us to shoulder our burdens and be with us as we live out our lives to his glory. That's the way of hope, a journey to peace and wellbeing.

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