

Minor Festivals: St. Mary, Mother of our Lord, August 15

You Want Me to Do What?

The young virgin had her life planned out. She was engaged to a man named Joseph who had a solid career as a carpenter. In those days an engaged couple were legally considered to be husband and wife, except for the consummation of the marriage, which took place on the wedding night.

She lived in a nice little town up north called Nazareth. One day she was minding her own business and an angel named Gabriel appeared to her. He announced stunning news: Without the benefit of a husband, she would give birth to a baby boy who would be the very Son of God. How? By the power of the Holy Spirit. She could have said, “You want me to do what?” But, instead, she humbly submitted to the will of the Lord and responded to the angel’s announcement, saying, “May it be to me as you have said.”

Gabriel had told her that her old barren relative Elizabeth was in her second trimester, so she went to the hill country of Judea to give Elizabeth assistance during her pregnancy. After three months she returned home. Joseph noticed that she was with child—and he knew that he didn’t have anything to do with it. Imagine the relief Mary must have felt when Joseph, after an angelic visit in a dream, announced to her that he was taking her home as his wife. Imagine the respect that she must have had for her husband who, out of reverence for the holy thing going on in her tummy, refused to have relations with her until after Jesus was born.

Nine months pregnant, she was forced to walk some eighty miles south to Bethlehem—no small feat. Her son Jesus was born. Shepherds visited. Magi worshiped her newborn. Herod tried to murder him, so she had to flee to Egypt for a couple of years. They went back to Nazareth. She raised her son Jesus along with four other sons and at least two daughters. No doubt Jesus was different—could you imagine raising a perfect son?

She was less than a perfect mother. When he was twelve she lost Jesus for three days. When he was thirty, Jesus had to lovingly remind her to keep her nose out of his business. At one time she and her family thought Jesus was out of his mind. She, too, needed a Savior from sin. She had the privilege of bearing the one who would bear the burden of her guilt to the cross. Imagine the pain that must have penetrated her heart as she stood at the foot of his cross. Yet, what did her son do? He made sure that she would be cared for after his departure—entrusting her to a trustworthy friend.

The grief that no mother wants to experience was soon taken away when she heard that Jesus was alive. The last we hear about her is after Jesus ascended into heaven, she was with the disciples in Jerusalem.

August 15 is the Festival of St. Mary, the Mother of our Lord. We don’t worship her. We don’t pray to her. But we thank God for the way that he used this flawed human being to bring the perfect Son of God, our Savior, into this world. We also marvel at how God uses us flawed human beings to carry out his sacred work. Through the gospel he has worked rebirth and renewal in our hearts, causing us to rejoice in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Savior. We are humbled, like the virgin Mary was, that he has chosen us sinners to be entrusted with the precious gift of the Gospel. May we, like Mary, be willing to be employed by our God in his saving work in whatever manner he desires. When called upon by our Lord to serve, rather than saying, “You want me to do what?” may we say along with her, “May it be to me as you have said.”

Pastor Zuberbier

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read Luke 2:41-52.