

Reflection on the Song of Mary Mother Of Our Lord

As Christopher reflected last week, lockdown is hard. How we need a tower of strength and a beacon to guide us. We have one in Mother Mary.

I wonder how you relate to Mary. In my growing up years in a middle of the road Anglican Church we never focused Mary or prayed to her. It is only since ordination and my move to an Anglo-Catholic parish that I found myself establishing a relationship with her. I think I am only moderately Catholic in that I don't feel I have to pray to Mary to ask her to intercede to Jesus on my behalf. Perhaps a better way to think of Mary is that she stands with us in solidarity as we pray to the Lord.

I have also had mixed feelings about her because I was a long-term infertility patient. I wondered how Mary felt when she found herself pregnant through a most unorthodox path.

I wonder if these two comments from a female perspective alienate some, as I am aware of the sensitivities of the LGBTIQ+ identification. But there is one more thing I want to say by way of background. Jungian psychology tells us that we take 30 years to establish our gendered identity. After 30, we begin to transcend our primary role and integrate our opposite side. Ideally in older age we become whole. With these thoughts in mind, I invite all of you to come along on a journey into Mary's strength and dedication to God.

We all know The Magnificat, some of us love it and many will love the old tune we sang at Evensong. Mary's song speaks of both spiritual and real hunger. It is the song in which the proud and mighty are toppled and the poor and oppressed ones are raised.

When Luke's Gospel was written the Roman armies had recently destroyed Jerusalem, slaughtered thousands dragged many into

captivity. The Magnificat was a powerful song of hope and protest. Then as now it tells us; in spite of everything, God will prevail.

I am sure if I asked what is the essence of the Magnificat you would all tell me that it demonstrates Mary's Yes to God. What did that "yes" mean in her life?

Mary is sometimes pictured as meek and mild, but she is the most courageous of human beings. She took on a task that defines her as Mighty Mary. We know the story.

As she waited for an impending arranged marriage, she heard a rustling and found an angel who said: "Rejoice beloved one. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women". She is told that though a virgin, the Holy Spirit would overshadow her. Her response is: "Here I am. May it be with me according to your will".

Early in her miraculous pregnancy, she visited Elizabeth and the baby in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy. Mary does not dwell on her own blessings, but she turns her attention to those who are oppressed saying: "He has scattered the proud.....he has brought down the powerful".

She gives birth to the Prince of Peace in a manger, a place of radical humility. The holy infant is visited by humble shepherds. Mary is a natural contemplative; she listens quietly and treasures the words of the shepherds who repeat the message of the angels. "Today is born a saviour". When she and Joseph take the child to the synagogue for ritual circumcision, Mary hands over her baby to Simeon and she hears the words "This child is destined for the rising and falling of nations. And a sword will pierce your heart too". Does she tremble? Probably. Does she turn away? No. She surrenders to God.

At the foot of the cross she watches her son die. After seeing him whipped she saw him crucified, suffocating in the fluid from his lungs. She watched him cry out to God in despair, and forgive those

who condemned him to death, then bless his fellow prisoners when he resigns himself to God's will. I don't know about you, but as a parent I find I have to distance myself from these events. I can't actually dwell on these images. I find it hard to imagine what happened when he was cut down from the cross.

But what I can imagine, is Mary patiently teaching Jesus' followers the mystical methods of contemplative prayer. This deep prayer, the sweet-spot of connection with God is a role model for us.

In a world struggling against senseless violence and growing economic disparity and all that is associated with a pandemic, Mary offers a feminine antidote to the poisons of poverty and ills of our life. Where society demands competition, she teaches cooperation. In place of mindless consumerism, she models compassionate service. She can't be defined as only passive and obedient. She is radical, and powerful, we could call her the engaged Mother of the World. She is a sympathetic companion in times of grief, we can lay our shattered hearts in her lap of mercy. Our troubles won't disappear, but we don't have to carry them alone.

The work of icons is to draw us into deep contemplation of mystery. Mary is a great mystery of faith. We could ask; where did she get her strength? What does she teach us?

This week I have been reading a book of Marian reflections. Each is connected to a modern icon that reflects aspects of Mary's strength and her gift. I will close with one of these.

Broken-hearted,

Open-hearted,

Brave-hearted Mother of God,

I weep with you.

You take into your arms

Those who have given up everything for the Truth.

All over the world,

Throughout the ages and right now,

The blood of the martyrs is spilled:

In prison camps and inner cities,

On battlefields and in hospitals,

In churches and synagogues;

They bleed for justice for the voiceless,

For peace on earth,

For freedom to praise,

For the rights of all beings to live in dignity;

They bleed for the bleeding earth,

And you, Blessed Mother,

Receive them all and weep for them.

Each one is your own holy child.

Each sacrifice is a sword in your own heart.

Reference

Icons by William McNichols Reflections Mirabai Starr *Mother Of God
Similar To Fire* Orbis Books New York 2010 P71

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15. 8. 2021

