



Bringing Home the Word

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God
January 1, 2017

Mary: Like the Morning Star

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

For the first four centuries following Jesus' ascension, Christians grappled with how to understand how his humanity and divinity commingled in his person. His humanity was evident to all who walked and talked with him. His divinity was also evident to his disciples because of the miracles he worked, not least his death and resurrection. In short, they knew he was fully human, and they knew he was fully God, but how could he be fully both at the same time?

The Council of Ephesus in 431 settled the issue definitively. The Church declared that in the one person of Christ there are two natures: one divine and one human. This same council also declared, as a natural consequence, that the holy virgin is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), since she conceived and gave birth to the Word of God. So today's feast is one of the oldest, shared by all Christians from the earliest times.

When Mary said "yes" to the Incarnation and gave birth to the Savior, all of us could bask in his divine light. She is like the morning star that first breaks the horizon and mirrors the light of the sun that she both foretells and follows. In loving Mary, we truly honor her Son. God was the first to praise her through Gabriel—"Hail, favored one!"—and the one who blessed her beyond all other creatures. We are merely following his example. †

Sunday Readings

Numbers 6:22–27

"The LORD bless you and keep you!
The LORD let his face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you!"

Galatians 4:4–7

"God sent his Son, born of a woman,
born under the law, to ransom those under the law."

Luke 2:16–21

"And Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart."

*"In loving Mary,
we truly honor
her Son."*

A Word From Pope Francis

Mary said her "yes" to God: a "yes" which threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil, and not only once. Any number of times she had to utter a heartfelt "yes" at moments of joy and sorrow, culminating in the "yes" she spoke at the foot of the Cross....God asks us to be faithful to him, daily.... This is the real journey: to walk with the Lord always, even at moments of weakness, even in our sins. Never... prefer a makeshift path.... That kills us. Faith is ultimate fidelity, like that of Mary.

—Mass,
St. Peter's Square,
October 13, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How is Mary like a guiding star in your life?
- How can you move closer to an unconditional "yes" in your relationship with God?



Learning Christ From Mary

From Pope St. John Paul II's *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*

Christ is the supreme teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of “learning him.” From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ.

But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother.

Contemplating the scenes of the rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to “read” Christ, to discover his secrets and to understand his message.

As we contemplate each mystery of her Son’s life, she invites us to...humbly ask the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

In the rosary,...the life of Jesus and that of Mary are deeply joined. Mary lives only in Christ and for Christ! If Jesus, the one Mediator, is the Way of our prayer, then Mary, his purest and most transparent reflection, shows us the Way.

The rosary is both meditation and supplication. Insistent prayer to the Mother of God is based on confidence that her maternal intercession can obtain all things from the heart of her Son. The rosary is also a path of proclamation and increasing knowledge, in which the mystery of Christ is presented again and again at different levels of the Christian experience. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, © January 2003 Liguori Publications

In the Icon, Mary Is Teacher and Evangelist

By Br. Daniel Korn

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is a *Hodergetria* icon, meaning, “One who shows the Way.” This perfectly describes Mary’s role in revealing to us the message of the gospel.

She stands before us looking intently out to those before her with her right hand pointing toward the Child she’s holding. In this icon, Mary is teacher and evangelist. Mary’s mission is to lead others to Christ, and, in the icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, we encounter Mary as the “Way Shower”—the sign that proclaims the mystery of Christ to the world.

The whole image of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is about Jesus Christ and

Mary’s role as his mother. When we look at this icon, we’re invited to read what’s contained in the image. We’re invited to read the icon as we would read a page in Scripture. This reading of the icon leads us into an experience of Mary that deepens our devotion to her. Through reading the signs and symbols presented in the icon, we’re led into a deeper experience of God.

Read the icon as you would read Scripture.

The icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help is the gospel in image form. Stand before this icon, read the elements that present themselves to you, and allow the holy presence of God to embrace you. Mary will provide this for all who come before her icon with humility and faith.

She will form Jesus in us. This is her mission. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, January 2016 © Liguori Publications



Lord, your Spirit has been poured into my heart, making me a child of God. Help me to see every person as my brother and sister, and show deep respect and love.

— From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 2–7

Mon. Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen: 1 Jn 2:22–28 / Jn 1:19–28

Tue. Christmas Weekday: 1 Jn 2:29; 3:1–6 / Jn 1:29–34

Wed. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton: 1 Jn 3:7–10 / Jn 1:35–42

Thu. St. John Neumann: 1 Jn 3:11–21 / Jn 1:43–51

Fri. Christmas Weekday: 1 Jn 5:5–13 / Mk 1:4–5, 7–11++

Sat. Christmas Weekday: 1 Jn 5:14–21 / Jn 2:1–12

Sun. Isaiah 60:1–6 / Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6 / Matthew 2:1–12