

Mary, Mother of God – 2021

Every year, as the calendar turns from December to January, we pause to look back at the year now concluded, and to look ahead to the year about to unfold. This past year has been draining and challenging for many, and tragic for some; but we benefit when we also identify God’s blessings and grace at work even in hard times. While putting up the new calendar reminds us that time indeed marches on, *we measure life not simply by the passing of days and weeks, but by the experiences we live through – events and relationships and decisions that gradually give shape to our lives.* The pace of change is rapid and the amount of information and commentary we hear can overwhelm. *Yet for each of us, there are moments that are frozen in time ... joys or sorrows or fears or experiences that remain vividly etched in our memories, even decades later.*

For Mary, the Annunciation was surely one of those moments. She must have thought so often of those words: “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a Son, and you are to name Him Jesus.” Her response remains the pattern of faith for every believer, words of enormous trust and courage: “**Let it be done according to your word.**” With that consent, Mary’s entire life changed, forever – but not in an instant. Mary’s “Yes” to becoming the Mother of Jesus, and thus truly the Mother of God, began a new relationship with God, but it was one that would unfold, in both joys and sorrows, over many years. *Just as when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, Mary’s Yes to the presence of Christ was a beginning, not an end; it was a departure, not an arrival; a stage of a journey, and not its conclusion.*

St. Luke tells us so beautifully that “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart” – perhaps his own observation from having interviewed her in her later years, as tradition suggests, for the Gospel he was writing. What an experience that must have been, to sit with Mary and hear the fruit of her reflections on the great things that God had done for her, and through her, for all of us. “Reflecting” is one

translation; but the verb Luke uses literally means **“pieced together”** or **“assembled.”** In other words, Luke tells us that Mary’s faith and openness to God did not give her the entire answer all at once to the questions of her life and her part in God’s plan ... but it DID give her the trust and patience to slowly, consistently, and gradually piece together this puzzle of what God was asking of her, ***and transform a puzzle into a mosaic of faith, and hope, and love.*** Mary is Mother of God not only in those nine months of her pregnancy with the fruit of her womb, Jesus; not only in that poor but glorious cave in Bethlehem; not only in the peaceful and hidden years of Nazareth as Jesus grew. She was Mother, too, as her Son walked the Way of the Cross; as she stood with John beneath her dying Son; and as she then held the Body of her crucified Child at the foot of the Cross, just as she had held that same Body, all those years before, when the Magi came to adore. I believe Mary had to say those words over and over, in many different moments and moods: “How can this be? ... Let it be done according to Your Word” – each time, an act of trusting faith.

Like Mary, our “Yes” to God will not give us the entire answer, all at once, to the questions of our lives. But each “Yes” – across the different moments and moods we experience – deepens our relationship with the Lord, and is a piece in that mosaic of our lives. As we accept what each day in this New Year holds for us, may we say with faith and courage: “Let it be done according to your Word.” ***And we ask her help ... Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.***