

Reflections

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Elizabeth Presents Mary to Us: Blessed Are You...

Mary is presented by her cousin, Elizabeth, with the greeting of praise: “Blessed are you who believed.” She invites us to recognize her as the Mother and Educator of the faith and as the model of our own faith.

If we pay close attention to the world today, we notice that it is going through a strong crisis of faith. There is a slow process of de-Christianization, a paralysis and even an extinction of faith in modern man. This is even so in religious Movements.

Perhaps it may also occur to us that someday we might have to confirm: Ultimately, I no longer believe what I believed before; my enthusiasm is lost.....the religious fervor of my youth is gone, and perhaps we may not feel too sad if we do not simply confirm it. Our faith-life has its ups and downs. We have times where everything goes bad for us... times when we find it hard to pray, to go to confession, to seek God. But, what will happen if these repeat themselves and they become permanent? In that crisis of faith, the Church today shows us the attitude of the Blessed Virgin. The Church shows us her exemplary faith. How does the Gospel present Mary’s faith to us?

a) Personal faith: For Her, believing is not knowing the “Creed” by heart... accepting it... defending it and confessing it every Sunday at Mass. For Mary, believing is committing herself with her entire being and with her entire existence to the personal God. It is not accepting truths and articles of faith, rather it is personally uniting to God. Mary is always open to God and to His wishes because She has great confidence in Him and because She trusts Him.

b) An active faith (free and obedient): The account of the Annunciation emphasizes the dialog between Mary and the Angel. It stresses that Mary does not give her answer in a passive way but in free and obedient faith. It is an active and responsible agreement.

Mary teaches us that true faith is far from being totally passive. Mary obeys by giving herself completely to the plan of God. But this unconditional surrender does not impede Her from questioning so that She can express her obedience freely and thus become a collaborator of that same plan. Mary’s faith is active because She supports and accepts that her own projects must always be destroyed anew. She does not question God, She questions herself.

c) Strong and loyal faith: Mary’s faith is not a finished faith from the beginning. She is also on the way with her faith.

Often she does not understand the ‘why’ of the events. She has to go through darkness – as all of us do, but She, as the Gospel says, “She kept all these things in her heart.” She places everything which happens to Her in relationship to God... with His Word and His Will. She seeks the meaning of everything... the Divine Will behind them.

Mary has maintained the faith throughout many trials and darkness....even to the foot of the Cross. Pope John Paul II says of Her: “She knew the same contradictions of our own earthly life. She was promised that her Son would be given the throne of David, but when He was born there was not even room for Him at the Inn....and Mary continued believing. The Angel told Her that her Son would be called Son of God, but She saw Him calumniated, betrayed and abandoned to die like a thief on the cross. In spite of it, Mary believed that the Word of God would be fulfilled.”

The strength and the loyalty of her faith is truly admirable. There was never anyone like Her; therefore, the Holy Spirit praises Her in her cousin Elizabeth by proclaiming Her Blessed because of the incomparable firmness of her faith. Mary is happy... blessed... full of grace... the greatest because She believed in God and surrendered to Him unconditionally.

The Blessed Virgin, this woman of extraordinary faith, has been given to us as a model on our pilgrimage of faith. From Mary we learn to trust and to surrender ourselves to a personal God. From Mary we learn to accept the Will of God in freedom and to collaborate with Him with an active faith. From Mary we also learn to believe when we do not understand God’s plan and to remain faithful in the trials of life. Therefore let us ask the Blessed Mother to form us and educate us in the faith according to her great example. Then someday we will also be told: Blessed are you because you believed!

Questions for reflection

1. How would I define my faith: lukewarm, profound?
2. Am I a Christian because of tradition?
3. Do I maintain my faith in difficult trials?

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